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Harriet

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Olive gasped, "I am your wife, Philip, am I not?"

"Yes," he answered, "nothing can alter that fact, save death!"

THE NEW  
"East Lynne"

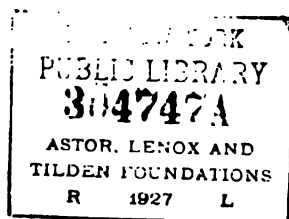
BY

CLARA MORRIS

*Author of "Stage Life," "A Paste-  
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AN ENTIRELY NEW AND ORIGINAL  
NOVEL



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NEW YORK

# The New "East Lynne."

## CHAPTER I.

### THE "MEPHISTO" DOCTOR.

It was the last Tuesday in April and next to the last day of the month. The eagerly awaited spring had come early to the winter-worn, grippe-harried people of the city. So early that in its tiny, private, iron-fenced inclosure everything budable had budded; small almond plants had rushed madly into pink flushed bloom, and the big four-story and basement brown-stone house, that seemed somehow to dominate the park with a certain stately ugliness, found its hard brown face all adrip with the pendulous, amethystine glory of a riotous wistaria vine.

There were other houses in that old-time place that supported the somewhat ragged and slovenly growth of wistarias for the sake of their springtime glory, but not one that burst the bonds and threw aside the cerements of wintry death so early; and neighboring residents were wont to say:



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"The old Keith wistaria is out; now ours will bloom shortly."

Save for the vine the old Keith mansion had for years been changeless, expressionless as the face of a trained diplomat. Other houses broke forth at longish intervals to the joyous tumult of wedding awnings and carpets; other houses burst forth into flowery triumph at Easter-tide, or flashed up red and green, basement to attic, at Christmas; but at an eighteen-inch level every white shade in this house front was evenly drawn and kept. No bird-cage, no bunch of flowers, no woman's face ever disturbed the chill order of its stiff propriety. No dog trotted cheerfully in and out the gate; no cat hunched purring on the sunny basement window-sill.

Yet the house was occupied nearly the year round by old Prof. Keith and the young Dr. Keith, his grandson. And there were those living near who were so impressed with its stony immobility that they doubted should the old man pass away whether the stately double door would yield its silver handle to the black swathing of crepe that would seem such a vulgar public expression of changes within.

At all events on that bright last Tuesday in April there was not a hint of coming change on the stately old brown-stone front—all was



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primly geometrical and exact, yet within love and passion were rising high, young life was demanding change; change that meant advancement, renewal; and old age was yielding, but with a grudging, chill courtesy.

For back in the sunny extension, beyond the two dim drawing rooms, old Prof. Keith and his grandson, Philip, were breakfasting together, for what would be the last time for several months. The furnishings of the table were of the best; the finest china, the heaviest silver and satinest napery; and yet above it all was the haphazard, happy-go-lucky air that comes on every table that has no woman at its head. But these two men saw naught amiss; they had kept bachelor-hall so long that they thought nothing of rising to search the fine old china closet, or the sideboard, for any missing dish, glass or condiment.

"Dr. Philip," as the old Professor called his grandson, invariably dressed all salads himself, standing at the sideboard and measuring ingredients with an exactitude brought from the laboratory. The older man, as acknowledged connoisseur of wines, ruled with much fuss and pomp and pother over the treasures of his wine cellar, to say nothing of the closet he had commandeered upon the second floor for his precious red wines, that being more sensitive to cold



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than heat, he dared not trust to the cellar's keeping during the winter's rigor.

To show how hard the Professor had always ridden his hobby, there was a story still extant of how he had once come to Philip's mother and demanded that she lift her sleeping child from the crib, that he might lay a couple of bottles of Madeira in his place, and so let the wine acquire the even, gentle warmth that would about bring it to the same temperature of the room in which it would be poured.

"Which," he didactically declared, "is the point of perfection in Madeira—neither warm nor cold, my dear, but just the temperature of the room."

And so, their wines and salads safe, these two men had trusted the rest to Mrs. Louisa Clutterbuck, the cook, and to Page, aged valet and general factotum. And, though they might have written their names and part of their family history in the dust covering the monumental old furniture, they had camped in two rooms upstairs, and had led a sort of picnic existence out here in the extension-room for five years—ever since the doctor's small brass name-plate had appeared beside the door—and they had found it good.

And now it was to change, for this was the "day before;" to-morrow would be Dr. Philip's

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wedding-day. Both men seemed a trifle self conscious. The doctor was operating a French, drip coffee pot, and Prof. Keith resting one arm heavily on the table watched him intently, as if he was studying a familiar face under a new, strange light.

His eyebrows, strong and black, in odd contrast to his white hair, had a Mephistophlian-like lift to the outer corners and a disconcerting trick of racing rapidly, malevolently up and down, above his piercing, dark eyes. His nose, the feature he had seen reappear without modification in his two descendants, son and grandson, was straight and powerful, with the broad, sensitive, wing-like nostrils of the strong-tempered man. His mouth was hard, the lips meeting evenly, and pressing into a tense line at times.

A fine intellectual head of the high-double-storied type; a scholarly-looking man; immaculate as to linen, but otherwise careless in his old-fashioned dressing. Big, bony, powerful for a man of seventy-four years, was Prof. Galbraith Keith, who had one passion, one love, one hobby.

For years of university work, now well behind the famous old scholar; years of instructing, of lecturing and writing, had failed to dull his life-long passion for studying the dead lan-



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guages. Sanskrit—that best preserved, most sacred literary treasure of India; Greek—sonorous and stately; Hindustani, modern Aryan, as he termed it; those ancient languages that in the dim past sprang vivid and expressively from a million ardent lips, that now are smothered into silence beneath the dust of dead centuries; each speech splendidly boastful, exalting the magnificence and prowess of king and warrior, whose unsurpassable glory must have passed bubble-like into nothingness but for the patient backward search of a few devoted scholars, who delve in the past as other men delve in mines.

Hieroglyphics, the sacred writings of Mexico or of Egypt, thrilled him with joy to-day, as they had done fifty years ago. Aryan was to him what the “open sesame” was to Aladdin. Aryan—mighty parent of splendid tongues! To speak the word was to open up to him through illimitable distances the past, peopled with tremendous mythologies, with dynasty stretching dizzy behind dynasty! That stupendous past made the transient present a thing of small account, hence the dust-veiled furniture, and content withal.

So much for the passion of “Old Comparative Phil”—as irreverent students used to call him.

His hobby was his treatment of rare wines and spirits; his love was for Dr. Philip Galbraith

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Keith, his grandson and namesake, who, in case of his own death, would be the last member of the once numerous Keith family. So, perhaps, it was well the boy should marry. Only—ah, when was there ever a marriage without an “only?”

An air of puzzlement came upon the Professor's face as he studied the doctor sitting opposite. A man who was good to look at; wholesome, clear-eyed, not greatly above medium height. The fine, all-round development of his well proportioned body suggested that athletics had been—well, let us say, included in his college curriculum. His was not the high-piled, elongated, melon-shape of head, on the contrary, the broad head, the squarer, forward thrusting of the jaw of the fighting man was his; the man of the day, of the hour, who lives in the present, works for the future, and ignores utterly the past.

Active, alert, capable of intense concentration; physically unacquainted with suffering of any kind, he was often found to be lacking in sympathy by his patients, who yet willingly trusted themselves to his knowledge and skill. He had lived a remarkably clean and temperate life for a youth so free to “gang his ain gaite.” True, his grandsire had warned, harangued and lectured him; but when did an enthusiastic

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sower of wild oats hold his hand at wisdom's word? So Philip's crop of wild oats had indeed been sparse and comparatively harmless, and to-day he looked a man with the right to marry a pure girl.

Suddenly the old man's brows ceased working up and down; comprehension shone in his dark eyes.

"Humph!" he grunted, "you have shaved off your beard! What's that for—vanity?"

The doctor laughed and passed his hand over his smooth cheek, and answered:

"No, sir; that was not my motive. You will admit, I am sure, that a woman should have a chance to see the face of the man she is about to marry?"

"Humph! I thought it was for woman that you grew that great beard of a Turk?"

"Women, Granddad; for cantankerous, elderly women, who would not accept the medical services of any smooth-faced boy. For to the middle-aged, middle-class woman a strong beard is the direct result of profound knowledge and immense experience. Now, however, that my practice is secure, hereafter I shall brazenly meet the world bare-faced, or nearly so"—he corrected, drawing out the ends of a handsomely curving mustache. "And I'll silence my old women by telling them I have shaved for purely hygienic reasons."

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"Who takes charge of your practice during your absence?"

"Oh, Jones, of course! He's a clever fellow in spite of his eccentricities, and I am sure we shall do well when we join forces in the fall. You must take a look in now and then at the new offices, sir. Painters are at work in them now. Page, hand the Professor his coffee. Only six numbers further west, yet it will seem odd to have my doctor's shingle moved from the home door to a new location."

"Don't you know that to take a woman into your life means continual change?"

"Oh, yes—and for the better," smiled the expectant bridegroom, turning his attention to lamb chops and hot breakfast rolls, and not at all disturbed by the fact of their being served in a Haviland soup plate.

"Shall you see our young lady to-day?" asked the Professor.

"Not so lucky, I am afraid! She is conventionally invisible to-day."

The old man's face fell.

"Confound their trivial little conventionalities! I wanted her to pass judgment on—er—this" (laying his hand upon a dainty looking flat package, lying by his plate).

"But, my dear sir," interrupted Philip, "you have already been most generous to us both, and the chest of silver"—



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"Tut—tut!" snapped the old man, "that's for the household. The old silver is wearing thin. We need new. But this is for herself. I have neither taste nor training in the selection of gifts. Whenever heretofore a brother professor has married, I grabbed a chunk of silver, no matter what shape, so it was big enough, and solid, and was done with the thing. But this"—he smiled a little—"this is different. You love her and I love you, my boy—so I'd like to please your Daphne, if possible. Take a look at it, will you?" and he passed the package over to his grandson, whose exclamation of pleased surprise as he opened the case, was gratifying to the last degree to the watching old man.

"Pearls, pearls! for Daphne. How perfectly they will suit her and what joy she will take in them! Sir," he jested, "you are, I think, the same old gentleman who has lately been haranguing me, in season and out of season, on the beauty and value of economy."

"Well, you surely don't expect me to practice as well as preach, do you?" grinned the Professor, amicably. "You find those pearls well matched, don't you, Philip?"

"Perfectly, sir, and I'm going to put them beneath the glass presently, just for the pleasure of proving their beauty flawless. A charming choice of a gift, Granddad, and you may be sure

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it will go to the altar about pretty Daphne's neck."

"Pretty—pretty!" snorted the old gentleman, with snapping eyes. "Pretty! good God, is that the term you apply to one of the superlative beauties of the world? Oh, what in Tophet ever led you to make such a choice for a wife?"

"Why, I thought you approved of my marriage," said the doctor drily.

"So I do, so I do! Only why could you not have chosen some bright, pleasant-faced, ordinary girl, who would have asked nothing other than to be wife, home-maker, mother?"

"Daphne wishes for nothing higher or greater than I can offer, sir!"

"Not now, while you are all lover—of course not. But, my boy, you are affectionate and loyal rather than passionate or poetic, and science is the real idol of your life; so, by and by, when the effusive lover has merged into the silent, thoughtful husband—what then? I tell you, Philip, you do not realize the very exceptional quality of Miss Cuyler's beauty. Your masculine vanity, the triumph of quick conquest, the nearness of possession, all blur your usual clearness of vision. But I—I, who am old and cold and critical—I am amazed at it! You smile—eh?"

"Well, let me tell you no man studies the stu-



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pendous past without learning something of the power of great beauty. Whether it be of that fair-faced thing that filled the sea with ships; the tramping of whose lovers shook the ground and from the fire of whose blue eyes a thousand funeral pyres were lighted—of that other with the countless wiles, whose splendor of dark hair descended cloak-like to her ivory-pale feet; whose inky, crescent brows drawn frowningly over her smouldering eyes and the hissing of her venomous red tongue changed lust of beauty to lust of blood, and thousands died in her wars, drunk with joy, each believing that the curve of her red mouth was for him alone.

“Ah, yes, those times are dead, you’ll tell me! But the mighty gods are not yet dead, and one of their dear jests is to dower some weak woman with superlative beauty and then, all defenseless, leave her to the merciless pursuit of the mad world. Can a man of moderate means, ambitious, with his own way to win, content such a woman? Can you hide the dazzling light of perfect loveliness beneath the bushel of simple domesticity? I doubt it.

“Miss Cuyler is pure and sweet and unassuming now, but beauty dominates its possessor as well as its adorers. It can only live and thrive on adulation and spoken praise—will you be the man to continuously speak of it? A woman

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takes nothing for granted, Philip, and when beauty finds general, simple compliment begin to pall—she may give ear to amorous compliments as well. In three years from now your Daphne will be an imperially lovely woman that you can only protect from the world by the buckler of your spoken love—spoken, sir, spoken!—that is the obligation you assume in marrying beauty, instead of an ordinary woman who could be treated in the ordinary way by a practical, well-meaning husband.

“There, now, I have given my warning and said my say. After to-morrow Miss Cuyler will be your wife and secure from further comment. Understand, Philip, there is no blame to be attached to her in any way—it is no fault of hers that she is set aside from other women by her physical perfections—no, indeed! But, my boy, to speak frankly, I—I had begun to hope that you would wait two or three years longer and perhaps marry Olive.”

The doctor, who had been listening with a flushing and annoyed face, suddenly flung back his head with a roar of laughter that fairly filled the house.

“I—I—marry that freckled faced baby? Why, sir, if a man may not marry his grandmother, neither may he take to wife his little sister!”

“Sister! Sister! What nonsense you talk!”



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grumbled the Professor. "Olive is your cousin's step-daughter, and of no blood kin at all! And as for being a baby, let me remind you that you have been overlooking schools, and doctors, and holidays, and managing her small inheritance for a good ten years! Baby, indeed! Why, she's only four years younger than your wife-to-be!"

And still the doctor laughed at the thought of marriage with little Olive Marr, from whose toy dishes he had taken many an afternoon tea, sometimes in his own person, more often as an anxious parent of many children, whose condition he gravely discussed. Never robust, her growth had been retarded by innumerable illnesses, and even now she had but recently been advanced to the dignity of braiding her reddish mane of hair with a great pigtail. Why, for three more years she would still be a child. "Anyway," he asked, "what man ever loved a girl whom he had known all her life? You see, it would have been impossible, Granddad?"

"Not," argued the old gentleman, "if she had been educated in a French convent, as I advised. Then she would have returned with the charm of novelty about her, and love might well have followed. I am sure such an idea was harbored by both your mothers; and as to your cry of 'Child! child!' let me tell you, Philip, your girl-

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child of fifteen is the psychical equal of a male eighteen or twenty. It will require a shock to open your eyes to that fact, I know, and I am willing to wager something that Olive's 'baby' hand will administer it."

"All right, sir; I'll welcome any experience that adds to my knowledge of human nature," laughed the doctor.

"How is Cousin Marr?" asked the Professor, his eyebrows rising and falling rapidly again. "Will she see the summer through, think you?"

"I hope so—oh, yes, I sincerely hope so. In fact, I am almost certain she will, for the tenacity of her frail hold on life is a thing to trust to as well as to wonder at. It is her will to live for little Olive's sake, and she does it. The winter has been cruelly hard upon her, but she is greatly pleased at the thought of passing the summer with you at Highlawn. It is very kind of you to have them there, sir."

"Humph! Kind! Why, the house is yours."

"But yours is the retirement, sir, that will be broken in upon—yours the studies interrupted. Though I have warned both guests that the library is a place of danger, where man traps and spring-guns lurk in dusty corners for the destruction of exploring feminines. I think, sir, you would do well to send old Clutterbuck up to Highlawn a day or two in advance of your own start, Page looking after you here and help-

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ing to shut the house for the summer or establishing a caretaker, as you think best. Then Cousin Marr and Olive might follow you in about a week—eh? All right? Good! Now, as I must look in at the bank, stop a moment at the law office of Bowdoin & Bowdoin to sign a paper or two, see my tailor and the florist, run over my sick list once more with Jones, call to say good-by to Cousin Marr, leave little Olive a consolation gift for missing my wedding tomorrow”—

“For God’s sake, Page, give him his hat!” interrupted the Professor. “He has no time to lose.”

“But I must deliver this first of all,” smilingly added Philip, preparing to close down the cover above the pearl necklace on its blue velvet rest. “I would like a card for this, sir?” he suggested.

The old man drew out a fountain pen and a visiting card and dashed across it a line, which Philip read aloud: “All happiness to my dear granddaughter, Daphne Cuyler Keith”—just as Mrs. Clutterbuck entered to ask if all was well with the breakfast, and she broke into a howl of protest.

“Oh, the bad luck of calling a bride-to-be by the new name before it’s given her by the man of God’s own lips! Oh, the pity of it, Mr. Philip! and she the beautiful creature the photograph



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shows her. What, pearls, too? For the love of God, are these men trying to see how many bad omens they can put upon the poor young thing's wedding! Pearls for tears, and calling her out of her name, too! I'm glad the responsibility is not on me for such doings."

"Clutterbuck," said the Professor, "you look after the house—we'll stand for the omens."

And while the woman still stood pleating her white apron, the doctor clapped on his hat, caught up his precious package and his gloves, and with a bright "Good morning, sir," was at the doors and through them before old Page reached the middle of the hall, meaning to open them for him.

As he was about to enter the cab, ordered the night before, he paused and looked up a moment, and noted the cold and stately reserve of the old house, that was but faintly softened by the drooping amethystine blossoms of the bronzy-green vine, and a light sprang into his cool blue eyes as he thought, "When Daphne comes here to reign the old house will blossom inside as well as out," and jumped into the cab and began his dash about the city.

Four o'clock found him dropping into an easy chair in the parlor of a pretty flat whose windows overlooked a bit of Central Park, and gladly accepting a cup of tea from the hand of

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the frail shadow of a woman he called Cousin Marr. They had discussed some small business matters, and with grateful tears she was thanking him for his unceasing care of her and hers.

"I thought it strange that my husband, Keith Marr, should burden so young a man as you were, Philip, barely twenty-one, with our affairs. But he was wise and clear of vision, and how faithful you have been to our interests! I am very happy to feel, Philip, and to be assured, that in your new happiness you will not forget my little one, in case my life should flicker out suddenly. No, no, dear friend, I have no special cause for fear, only the end cannot be far off now, and when I am gone Olive, my girl-child, will be alone in the world."

"Not while I am alive, Cousin Marr! The Professor is also very fond of Olive and would gladly welcome her to our home."

"And—and your young wife, Philip—do you think she would consent to her presence?"

"Do you think," interrupted the doctor, "that she is too cold-hearted not to welcome to her home her husband's orphan ward? Ah, you do not know my Daphne! Have no anxiety there. The home of Daphne shall be also the home of Olive if need be. Where is the little one? I suppose the diphtheria scare is over now. When do the girls return to school?"

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"Monday next, I believe," answered Mrs. Marr. "And they will have to cram like geese if they are to make any show at commencement."

"I hope Olive is not going to over-exert herself?"

"I don't know. Dear me! I don't recognize the child these last few weeks. She has grown so irritable and provoking and cries at a word, or even a look. She adores you, but the announcement of your coming marriage seems to have turned her into a little spitting, hissing, back-arched cat."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" he objected, lightly. "Wait until she cuddles into this chair with me, and investigates my pockets. You will see the child unchanged."

And just then a thin, sallow-faced girl, with hair in a heavy pigtail and wearing an ankle-length skirt that plainly showed where a tuck had recently been let out, sprang into the room with a cry of rapture, rushed toward the doctor—only to stop suddenly and offer a limp hand, with a muttered "How do you do?" And during the next twenty minutes she proved herself a very porcupine abristle, and every quill an in-nuendo, an impertinence or a gaucherie.

"What on earth ails the child?" he wondered.

Once her brown eyes glowed with a golden



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light for a moment, when she saw the slender bangle-bracelet of turquoise flowers he offered her. But at the term "consolation gift" she dropped it saying childishly: "It would take more than that to console me for being altogether forgotten."

Suddenly she broke out accusingly: "You did not want us even to know how beautiful your Miss Cuyler is; but Mr. Belden called—just a stiff, got-to-do-it call on mamma—and he said Miss Cuyler was a friend of his, and that she was the loveliest woman outside of Paradise. And I asked him how he knew, and he said—"

"Olive!" entreated her mother.

But the girl went sullenly on: "He said he had made a life-long study of the comparative beauty of women, and so he knew."

"What the deuce did the man mean by such ballyrot?" exclaimed Philip.

"Well," persisted Olive, "how beautiful is she then—the one you're going to marry? Tell me that."

"Why, like thousands of other women. She has a straight, strong body, a clean skin and clear eyes, and what every man seeks in the woman he loves—the beauty of perfect health."

At the last words the poor, jealous child's angular body shrank as from a blow; her sallow, sickly face quivered all over. The doctor, who



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could have bitten his tongue in repentance for his unintentionally wounding speech rose to take his departure, and, as he had always done, he lifted her resisting little face and dropped a good-by kiss upon her lips, then stood in mute amazement, for the child was dyed with one great agonizing blush, that seemed to scorch over neck and ear, over cheek and brow, and she looked at him with the eyes of an insulted woman.

"Why, Olive—little Olive!" he stammered, then turned and left the room. As he re-entered the cab, he suddenly recalled his grandfather's words: "Your girl-child of fifteen is the psychical equal of a male of eighteen or twenty."

"By Jove, granddad was right!" he said, uncomfortably. "Ah, well! in another twenty-four hours Daphne and I will be on the ocean. Olive will forget her childish whim, and my wife's beauty will cease to interest any one but myself."

No wonder Puck cried, "What fools these mortals be!"

## CHAPTER II.

TURK BELDEN.

Edgar LeGrand Cuyler and his wife Dorothy Langdon Cuyler stood in their flower decked suite of rooms in an upper west-side family hotel. The man looked about him with a worrying expression of face.

"Never mind, Edgar, dear," murmured his wife consolingly. "This final expense ends it all. At the altar we lay down our responsibility. Daphne passes to the protection of a husband, and we will be free to enjoy a well-earned rest.

"It is not such a position as her beauty should have commanded, Dorothy."

"Perhaps not, dear, but when you consider how bitterly resentful society is of great beauty that is without wealth, we have not done so badly. Remember what sacrifices an unmarried niece does entail, and be content Edgar."

"The doctor has not much fortune," the elderly and somewhat timorous uncle of Daphne protested.

"No, but he has character, a good family, and fine prospects," comforted Aunt Dorothy, but-

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toning a long glove. "Besides the young pair are romantically in love."

"I wish," grumbled Mr. Cuyler, "Belden had appeared upon the scene a bit earlier—he has millions."

"Yes, but Mr. Stanley Belden is not a marrying man, Edgar. Moreover his reputation is such as to make his attentions injurious to any young girl."

"He fairly doted on Daphne's beauty," persisted Mr. Cuyler.

"Y—yes, just as he has doted on every other exceptional beauty seen by him between his insolent youth and blasé age," frowned Aunt Dorothy, feeling anxiously for the possible escape of a scolding look at the nape of her neck, while he fretted on.

"If Daphne had really exerted herself she might possibly have brought him to the point."

"Edgar!" exclaimed his wife, with an air of offended dignity. "Our niece Daphne is not, thank God, the type of girl that 'brings men to the point,' as you vulgarly put it. She is an unspoiled, well-bred girl, who has forgotten, in her passionate young love for Philip Keith, her foolishly high social ambition. And I am very glad that her marriage takes her beyond your Mr. Belden's unwholesome influence. I greatly prefer that he should be 'doting' on the newest Pa-

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risian discovery, or some other sophisticated beauty. No—no! Edgar, I will listen to no more moans. We could have done no more for our own little Lola, had she lived, than we have done for your brother's child. Had a good dowry been added to her looks, Daphne might have done better socially, but as it is she has the man of her own choice, who has force, determination, and sincerity, and who will make his power felt in the world. So let us be thankful for the present, and leave the future on the knees of the gods! Turn about, dear—let me look you over. You certainly do your tailor credit. Why, Edgar, your back is as flat as it was on our own wedding day."

And though he pooh-poohed the remark, his satisfaction was evident. "And now," continued she, "I must go into Daphne's room and see, since she is determined to wear the veil over her face, whether the maid of honor or the bridegroom is to lift it."

"Good heavens! Dorothy! the bridegroom of course!" shouted Uncle Cuyler. "The bridegroom lifts the veil, else the old custom has no signification at all! Tell Daphne so!"

"Yes—yes, I will Edgar!" twittered the wife, and trailed her shining grey draperies away to the secret bower of the bride and her maids, where all the laughing confusion and useless



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excitement so necessary to a "really—truly" wedding was in full blast; where the strenuous and misguided assistance of four pretty mad-cap girls made the dressing of the bride an impossibility.

"Oh, Aunt Dorothy!" cried Daphne, "make an effort—one more effort to marry off your troublesome niece! Clear these crazy things out of the room, or I shall never be dressed in time for the ceremony! And if I am late Philip will surely leave the altar to attend to some patient, and like a foolish virgin, I shall be left standing outside the door! Out with them, Auntie!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The day before, Dr. Philip Keith had said, "To-morrow Daphne will be my wife, and her beauty will cease to interest anyone but myself," and he had meant what he said, being an open-natured, clean-minded man, absolutely without guile or duplicity—yet on this very wedding day, on lower Fifth avenue, in a great double mansion of brown stone, whose windows were draped in fawn silk, and richly screened with lace, whose beauty and value made it worthy of a cardinal's wearing, a man stood looking out, whose whole nature was dominated by the

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beauty of the girl, going gladly to her marriage with another man.

Here stood Mr. Stanley Belden, and Daphne Cuyler's beauty was the power that was altering all his plans, and reshaping his immediate future. In most men such a thing would be incredible—but Turk Belden, as his detractors called him, was not an ordinary man. Self, was the god of his idolatry. His ambition was to know the taste of every pleasure the world could offer to man. That he might miss no joy of art or music, he had trained his eye and ear as carefully as his palate. For poetry of high thoughts expressed in melodious flowing words, he had an appreciation as keen as that he felt for the exquisite bouquet of old wines. A linguist of parts, he sought his pleasure in many lands, of many people. Not wholly a carnalist, yet with his great wealth and refined licentiousness he was a sort of modern Sardanapalus.

In appearance a very dark man with a hint of the Oriental in his slow moving, thick lidded, dark eyes, and heavy nose. His jaw started all right and square, but tapered rapidly to a pointed, deep-dimpled chin; while above the full red lips of the gourmet was an unquestionably dyed and waxed mustache. Dressed with the perfect taste that forbids comment, that dyed mustache was a veritable solecism.

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His manner with women was gravely courteous, almost courtly; with men he was insolent and cynical. He divided the entire sex into two parts, the men who borrowed from him, and the men who only tried to borrow. People who disliked him said he was a Jew—he was not. They said his grandfather had been a peddler—he had not. Stanley Belden, this cultivated pleasure lover was the perfect, fine flower of three generations of inherited wealth. Two generations of bankers stood between that Belden who had worked with willing hands to earn the money for his start in banking, and this immensely wealthy, wholly idle Belden, whom the world dubbed gentleman, and who was persona grata in high social places. Though he flouted society often and made many incursions in Bohemia, yet he was ever smiled upon, for was he not a man of millions and unmarried?

Perhaps society had even known, as did his boon companions, of certain baser tastes, that led him at long intervals to disappear from all the haunts of decency, and for a time to plunge alone and reckless of all danger, into the lowest depths of vice—where like swine all wallowed in degradation. When he rose to the surface again and returned to his anxious valet, haggard, shaken, worn, he sought his great white bath with all the passionate ardor of a lover re-



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stored to a beloved mistress and with renewed zest revelled in the pleasures of a gentleman.

Next to himself Stanley Belden most worshipped woman. The tense excitement other men found in the pursuit of great game, he found in the pursuit of female beauty. His taste, though cultivated, was most catholic. The exquisitely modelled slenderness of an amber-hued maid, with long, almond eyes of liquid darkness, won from him admiration as keen as that he gave to some coroneted Hebe-like creature, with the wild rose in her cheeks. And smiling his discreet and meaning smile, he had gone triumphant on his contented way through years as full of golden pleasures as a meadow may be full of golden buttercups, until one day—only a few years ago—he knew the date exactly, for his tortured vanity would not let him forget even that hour in which he first endured a woman's contemptuous laughter.

Then he had changed; a sullen resentment came into his eyes. With men he became savagely cynical; he grew morosely reserved. All forms of excitement he had worn out save only gambling, and even that was an acquired taste, for his was not the world-forgetting, mad passion of the born gambler. So with senses sated, he secretly counted himself dead in life.

And blasé, embittered, bored, he had early in

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October gathered a stag party of friends about him on his yacht, the Siren, and returning to America, had opened up the old Fifth avenue mansion for the winter, and approved plans for the improvement of his Newport cottage, where he proposed to establish his widowed Aunt, Mrs. Hartley Dunham—for though she was very old, she loved society with an undying love, and would frivel with the frivolous to her last breath of life; and to act as hostess for her nephew Stanley would indeed be a large and stately feather in the old lady's girlish head gear.

Then in one of his blackest moods he met Daphne Cuyler. He had escorted his aunt to a charity bazaar that evening. Daphne, having sold everything from her stall, closed and left it, to stroll through the rooms and see what others had still to offer buyers—when Belden's sullen eyes caught and noted her grace of motion. There was something so deliciously sensuous in the slight swaying of her rounded hips, and through Belden's mind flew the thought, "By Jove, she walks like a carrier of water jars!"

He had followed her persistently, and at last where a balconied window had been turned into an alcove by the aid of encircling tall palms and flowering plants, their two names had been murmured; and the girl, who had removed her gloves in the interest of change-making, seeing

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the courtly, elderly gentleman bowing before her, made friendly offer of a bare little hand.

In the moment of realizing her beauty, lo, a miracle! For along the dull, numb nerves there ran a thrill of life, of rapture—keen to anguish! The man's face flushed a dull, dark red, a vein stood out like a letter Y upon his brow, purplish black and throbbing visibly. He thrust his fingers inside his collar, and dragged its pressure from his throat.

Daphne exclaimed, "You are not feeling well, Mr. Belden. Will you not sit here beneath the lowered window for a few moments?"

He thanked her, muttered some words of excuse, and left the building, leaving the carriage and footman to await his aunt; and with irregular steps sought his home. He heard his own voice repeating over and over, "Was dead—and am alive again! Was dead—and am alive again!" He saw very dimly, and putting up his hand, found his eyes were wet.

Once in his apartments he paced for hours back and forth. Once he saw, quite clearly, the stupid beauty of that ox-eyed thing bought by his gold, who had mocked him five years before, and for the first time he failed to curse the very thought of her—only shrugged his shoulders contemptuously and called up the memory of the splendid sapphire-blue eyes, with tiny glints

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of light rising from their depths, as tiny beads and bubbles rush upward through amber wine. Called up the picture of the proud young mouth; counted the hours that must pass ere he could see her again and realize every detail of the amazing beauty of this unknown child, whose slender hand had pushed aside the blank dead years, that like a great stone had closed him as in a sepulchre.

Then suddenly in his shaken mind there sprang up an inquiry of such fierce import as paled his very lips with fear. Did the restoration to the joy of life mean manhood, unqualified, independent, with freedom to count the world once more the store house of his pleasures; or was that moment's rapture but an episodic ephemera, putting a sharper edge upon his dull hatred for those who secretly fleered at him? Was he once more worthy of his own worship, or would to-morrow see him back gloomy, taciturn at the stupid, joyless routine of pretended license and excess?

Once he seized his hat and knowing well the night life of the city at 3 a. m., meant for the moment to put his fate to the touch—but stopped suddenly, sneering, "Ah, courage does not thrive on woman's scorn! Malevolent laughter at my expense to-night would give me the hands of a strangler! I'll know my fate soon

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enough—whether bond or free-man!”—and so walked and dreamed open-eyed, alternately thrilling with rapture or chilling with dread, until at rosy dawn he had cast himself a moment among the cushions of a couch, and there fallen asleep, to the shocked amaze of Anton, who had waited all the night for his master’s summons.

He had lost no time in seeking out the lovely Miss Cuyler. Early and late he showered attentions upon her, and though the aunt, Mrs. Edgar Cuyler, had shown perfect savoir faire in receiving him in her hotel home, there was a delicate reserve back of her courteous welcome that he understood perfectly and respected, though he chafed furiously at the closeness of the guard she kept upon her niece, with whom he knew no moment’s greater intimacy than their brief stroll together with uncle and aunt following within hearing distance. All of which only egged his passion on, for he had quickly learned the truth, that only through this girl he lived, that in her careless, little hands lay all his joy of life; that in his barren years her smile must make his sunshine, or he must stumble on through cold obscurity.

He had been swift to understand Daphne’s preference for young Keith, and his vanity had writhed like a scotched snake, and he had cursed

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the insolence of youth for thus ignoring his pressed claim. "That splendid beauty wedding with a practicing doctor, who would have to grind eternally at his profession, to her neglect," he grumbled! Then smiled his wicked smile, and began to plan for the future.

"I will wait," he whispered, with a red glint in his slow eyes. "Time does much—fate works hard for the man who waits long enough. Daphne is not the type of beauty that passes with girlhood; there is something sculptural about her even now. A few short years will make of her a very goddess, and in those years romance will evaporate, the lover will be lost in the prosaic husband. Sentimental love for one woman can live in no man through five years—there will be the opportunity of a discreet family friend."

This elaborate cruelty was natural enough to the self-loving, pleasure-seeking man, whose world had suddenly become so small that it held but one fair woman whom he coveted with all his soul. The attainment of Daphne as a married woman to him was well worth his waiting, it would give zest and motive to his dull life.

True, when he thought of the young husband's years of possession, he writhed with a groan, "Oh, damn him! damn him!" he was nevertheless utterly indifferent to law or order, to

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right or wrong. Only he felt that he could not bear the torture of Daphne's near presence through the years of waiting for her warm young love for Keith to dull or die. He feared that in some access of mad passion he might be guilty of a faux pas unpardonable, unforgettable. And now, on this wedding morning, Stanley Belden looking out with unseeing eyes, was for the last time questioning himself, asking whether this was truly a great passion, well worth the altering of all his plans; well worth long banishment from his native land, or was it but an episode such as came into the lives of all men? And suddenly he decided on a plan. He had excused himself from attendance at the wedding on the ground of family bereavement scarce three days old, but now he ordered his tandem cart, and prepared for a drive. As his man moved among boot-trees and hat boxes, from wardrobe to bureau, Belden suddenly exclaimed "Where is your head, Anton? What are you about this morning?"

He had spoken mockingly rather than harshly, for he well knew that his own restless irregularities, the broken routine of his recent months were the cause of his old servant's confusion of mind, and he smiled.

Gathering up the garments laid out, Anton stammered, "I—I ask your pardon, sir, I really

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ask your pardon—I quite stupidly forgot you are in mourning sir.”

“You quite stupidly forgot I am in black, you mean. Bah, what a clumsy old custom it is! Why on earth does not America adopt the black band about the arm, so generally worn abroad? It announces bereavement and expresses sentiment quite as well and far more artistically, more modestly than our ostentatious plunge into black from head to foot, which is expensive, ugly and oppressive and often as in my case utterly hypocritical. For I mourn not at all over the death of old Peter Paul Belden, who had more than a touch of the miser about him, and I despise the man who loves money for its gross, stupid, material self. A man should use his money for his own pleasure, or for the pleasure and profit of others—not vulgarly hoard it, as did Uncle Peter Paul.”

“You will never be so blamed, sir,” ventured old Anton. “For you have used your wealth like a golden key for the unlocking of all the pleasures of the world.”

He spoke with respectful admiration, for this pleasure seeking egotist, without morality or honor, had the loyal affection of his servitor, because of his unfailing generosity, and that fine breeding that with him forbade brutality of speech to an inferior. It was to Willie Wyatt, his



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close chum of full ten years, and known in club life as "Turk Belden's man—Friday," that he was sometimes savagely abusive. For though Wyatt lived on Belden's bounty, he was in point of family the best placed of the two—therefore it was he, the equal, who knew the rough side of the Belden tongue, not Anton the servant, who was advancing with a dark seal ring in his hand, suggesting respectfully that his master wear it in place of the sunken large diamond on his finger.

"Ah, Anton, you have caught me napping this time! Only to think, I wore this ring all day yesterday with black. I really hope I have not shattered all the conventionalities?"

"By the by, uncle's will is to be read this afternoon, and I wager every dollar will be secured to the Beldens, who do not need it. No college, no museum, no church will profit by a bare five thousand. Well, if there is anything left when I'm through, after a bequest or two—no names mentioned to-day Anton—my money goes to some hospital. Sickness is the mightiest giant in the path of the poor, and I'd like to help down it for 'em! I'd build a church, too, if I lived anywhere but in America, where churches are only opened on Sunday to a few well behaved ladies and gentlemen, and are sealed and bolted like great useless stone vaults all the six

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days, when people are most tempted, tried and tormented by the world; and would be so glad many of them for a brief refuge in the quiet sacred place of prayer. For, for those who can believe in it, often find great strength as well as comfort in prayer. You remember those old world edifices, Anton, where the people slipped noiselessly in and out, those dim old churches that are ever open, all the weeks and all the years, a place of refuge from despair, a place of contemplation? Oh, no locked up churches for my money! Say, look if the horses are round yet!

Suddenly his outburst of talkativeness ceased. Once more he stood staring from the window in deep thought. "Y—yes—yes! he would see Daphne as a bride! Would see her leaning on the arm of the man she loved! He would look upon her, if possible with the eyes of a casual passer-by, and he would be ruled by the resulting impression—Eh?"

"The cart is at the door, sir."

He accepted gloves and hat from Anton and a few moments later was sending his beautiful Powhattan and Pocahontas up the avenue, harnessed tandem, and driving with an unpretentious calm certainty of touch that proved him a master of the ribbons.

Up near to the Central Park entrance he

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drove, glancing frequently at his watch—then turned, to the surprise of the groom behind, and loitered down the avenue again—to where he expected to see the red carpet and red and white awning stretched from the church door to the sidewalk's curb, and to his surprise there was a considerable crowd there; eager faced they stood on near-by stoops, and made the sidewalk impassable.

"What does all this mean? Can I have missed her after all?" again he consulted his watch. "No, the time is correct—but why this crowd? This must be some other and more fashionable function."

He drew his horses to a walk—to a standstill. A policeman approached, looked the outfit over, and asked, "Anything amiss, sir?"

"No, thank you—but, officer, what' is drawing this crowd?"

"A weddin,'" was the laconic answer.

"But surely this is a wedding of not much importance—that is, of little interest to anyone?"

"Oh, I don't know," grinned the policeman. "There are two people mightily interested," and Belden was tempted to add, "There are three possibly," but he held his peace.

"Just look at that gang, will you! You couldn't pull one of 'em loose with the help of a

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derrick or a crane. And that's the bride's crowd. Those that saw her go in are waiting for another glimpse, and the crowd has grown by tips. For it's a dead cold fact, that smart-set or no smart-set the most beautiful girl in New York City to-day, is in there gettin' married on the strict q. t. Oh, my beat gives me a view of the most talked of, most pointed at women of the 400, and there's a lot of 'em that's only handsome because of their surroundings—but the girl that's gettin' married in there now, is one of them creatures the Lord only makes once in a long time—just to keep His hand in! I'm giving it to you straight, sir—she's a corker!" A smile touched the full smooth lips of Belden, as he sent his horses slowly forward. "Perhaps I'll return and steal a look with the rest of the crowd," he said indifferently.

"It will pay you for your trouble, sir," laughed the officer, who saluted and crossed the street.

Down the avenue for a few blocks went the beautiful, high-spirited, high-stepping mahogany bays with black points, making splendid show of perfect training and perfect manners, and then once more they were swung about, and under strong restraint sent slowly mincing and teetering toward the church, and fell into a walk, as the strains of the triumphal wedding march came through the doors; preceding the modest

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wedding procession, that was yet honored by some very stately, even famous personages.

Was it chance or the fate Belden trusted, working for him through the nervous terror of two excited horses, who would not stand at the opening of the tunnel-like awning, but bolted past it, forcing the bridal couple to step outside the awning to enter their carriage; and so gave the waiting man full view of Daphne Keith, standing under the searching merciless noon-day flood of light? The first result of that coup d'oeil was the wholly impersonal acknowledgment, "Yes, here is one of the great beauties of the world!"—but the next instant she was Daphne, the woman he coveted, and his heart plunged in his breast like a frightened horse, and he breathed in hurried gasps as he saw the round slenderness of her young body, moulded in the shimmering, soft whiteness of her gown. He even noted the need of one more pearl to the strand that pressed a trifle too closely about the full white throat, the orange buds and flowers half lost in the warm dusk of the thick growing hair, that rippled away from the low wide brow in dense, crisp, psyche-like waves—all etherealized by the misty floating bridal veil.

For one moment she lifted the sapphire-blue of her dark lashed eyes to Philip's face, with a look of such all-revealing love, as brought Bel-

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den's jaws together with a trap-like snap, in an effort of unmoved endurance of a feeling of bitter injury, of a fierce jealousy almost unbearable.

Then just as the bride was bending her stately head to enter the carriage, that was kept moving back and forth by the unsteady nervous horses, she caught sight of Belden, and nodded him a careless but surprised recognition. He raised his whip in a grave punctillious salute, and blindly sent his horses forward, only conscious for the moment of the thrilling of his nerves, the turmoil of his mind, and the unpleasant pressure of his hat against the heavily throbbing vein in his forehead.

Gradually his eyes cleared, his nerves steadied, but he had covered full five of the Park's good ten miles of carriage roads, before he was his old suave, unmoved self again. His doubts now were ended; his decision made. He had come out with the intention of studying Daphne Keith, as nearly as possible from the standpoint of a curious stranger, who might have heard of her beauty. Well, if he had meant to measure her power, he had simply found it immeasurable. Looking upon her with all the impersonal aloofness he was capable of attaining to, the result had been that her radiant beauty, and that sweet nameless charm, that lure of sex, that unnamed

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has ruled the world through man, had aroused in him an acuteness of sensation, a vivid leaping consciousness of feeling, bewildering and not far from pain.

So all doubt was ended. Daphne the beautiful, was to be no episode in his life, but its guiding power. He said to himself. "This is to be a waiting game! Well, at least it will have the charm of novelty, for one who has never waited, but has always stretched out a strong hand and taken! A waiting game, but"—he closed his eyes a moment, and the slow, meaning smile of former years crept to his smooth red lips, "But the prize is worth the winning—the game is worth the playing." Then with a grim little laugh, he added, "I have one advantage over Jacob, it will be easier to wait a few years at forty-two, than it would have been at the hey-day of my youth," and before midnight he had sent forth three peremptory orders.

The first was to his captain on board the yacht Siren, then tied up in the Morris Dock basin, summoning him, the steward and chief engineer to meet him the next day at 3 sharp—for he rejoiced at the near readiness of the yacht that newly painted, with deck varnished and brasses polished, required only supplies to go on board, and the shipping of a crew; and he promised himself that he would put the steward at a rush.

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Then make the captain crowd things, and while having his chronometer and compasses overhauled, to provide himself with a full line of charts for foreign waters.

He, Belden, would go in person to the Custom House and renew his papers, and he assured himself that it need be but a matter of seven or eight days before he could again speak the conventional formula: "Captain Simpson, I declare the yacht Siren in commission"—see the club flag, private flag, and yacht ensign "broken out," and be free to put to sea at once.

The second dispatch was a curt order to his business agent anent the dropping of the planned alterations at Newport, and the closing of both his houses. While a last was to the ever devoted, ever ready man—Friday, without whose effervescent spirit of gaiety he would have died of ennui on the deck of his own yacht. So, it was to Willie Wyatt, in London, on Belden's business, that was sent a cipher cablegram, which translated read:

"Everything off—all plans changed—yacht ordered in commission. You are authorized master of ceremonies. If party all sympatica may circle globe. Choose fair ones yourself—I only bar blue eyes. Black, brown, hazel or gray, but for God's sake not blue. That stands—move quick—letter follows. S. B.



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And yet a great voice, speaking clearly from Heaven, through the thunders of Mount Sinai, has said: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."

## CHAPTER III.

### THREE YEARS LATER.

Another spring day three years after that morning when Philip Keith had said, "When Daphne reigns here this house will bloom inside as well as outside"—and now the old house from being the most severe had become the gayest one that faced the iron-fenced small park.

The spring flowers in overflowing window boxes, laughed up at the down drooping wistaria; the shades were drawn higher up, showing frilly inside curtains tied back with gay ribbons.

Sometimes the beautiful profile of a woman reading was seen at the window, while more often a glimpse was had of a toddling baby girl, with a flower fair face, who held upon her small white sleeve arm a pink-breasted cockatoo of such amazing amiability that when the child in an outburst of affection gave it a rump-ling embrace with both arms, it made no attempt to bite with its hooked beak, only miraculously escaped and clambered sidewise to

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the window sill, where it proceeded to cut to pieces the hanging shade cord, to its own and the child's satisfaction. For it was the bird's ability in cutting up pencils, tooth-picks and writing paper that had won for it the surprising name of "Scissors."

Even at the basement windows, where bad street boys would not permit flowers to bloom, there were healthy little evergreens in boxes, and on one or the other of them, where the sun shone, a black cat, with small scarlet tassels in his pierced ears, sat and purred

As it was changed externally, so was the old Keith house changed internally. The dusty, dim, darkness of the two drawing rooms, the heavy monumental pieces of black walnut, ugliest of valuable woods, were gone. It had become a place light, beautiful, delicately rich; a place of much white enamel, of dead gold, of the clear yellow tones Daphne loved so ardently. Where many white rugs lay about, where the great piano, no longer jammed against the wall, was drawn out, draped in dim old brocade and backed by a tall-growing, slender palm in a great gray-blue richly glazed tub—a tree that remained a few weeks on duty, then made place for a companion palm, while the other recuperated at a nearby conservatory.

A place of Watteau screens gold framed, of

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cabinets for small bibelots, of couches, of big strong chairs, of broad fluffy low chairs, of dim brocaded draperies arranged to hang with infinitely careful carelessness. A place of comfort, of invitation, as well as beauty.

Only at the threshold of the library the spirit of change had halted, had held her iconoclastic hand. Its expensive, heavy ugliness had been untouched. The windows alone were kept immaculately clear, all the rest of the old room was left to dimness, dust and peace, for which two men rose up and called that active young spirit, blessed.

Upstairs gray-blues and white, daffodil-yellows and white, pale soft Pompeian reds, replaced the former wall papers of dark blue trumpet-creepers bearing large chocolate-brown blossoms—a design known to have produced both hysteria and delirium in cases of sickness. Light brass had replaced monumental black walnut, English chintzes, simple, clearly, pretty, whose lavish blossoms only needing perfume to prove them straight from the fields—reigned happily above the stairs.

In the extension, that was still used as a breakfast room, the innovations were indeed small, but very suggestive. For at the table stood a child's high chair, and in one window lay a soft red cushion for the pet cat, black Tummy,

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and against the wall stood the tall brass cage "Scissors" condescended to occupy at night, and on those occasions when guests were in the drawing room; guests who might not sympathize with a pink cockatoo's burning curiosity anent the security of their shoe buttons, chate-laine watches, stick pins, etc.

Change had also come to the family in the old Keith house, but simply by way of addition. The former occupants were still there in the person, first of Professor Galbraith Keith, with his rapidly working old eye brows, and ever watchful eyes. Who was still declaring "words without roots, as unsatisfactory as kites without tails." Still delving eagerly for exact knowledge, and was just beginning to taste a new pleasure in teaching his baby great-grand child to recognize two or three of the symbols of ideas used in hieroglyphic picture writing. Fairly "swelling wisely," not with "tea," but pride, when the tiny Daphne-May put a finger on the representation of an ostrich feather, and he wonderingly asking what it could mean, and she surprisedly reminding him that it meant "trufe"—and he doubting, and she laboring to freshen his memory, and convince him, and at the very last succeeding. It was a great game and tremendously characteristic of the old scholar who invented it.

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Secondly, there is Doctor Philip Keith, erect, open-faced, clear-eyed, with a somewhat changed manner, for with increased professional status, there had come to him an air not of self-assertion, but rather of calm authority, resulting perhaps from the praise of his patients and the approval of his colleagues, with whom he was a great favorite. By hard work he had extended his practice and his income. Women liked him naturally, and he was quick to secure and utilize that liking. Nature had fitted him out, not only with the doctor's hand of smooth soft palm and sensitive finger tips, at once gentle and strong, but with a true gift of diagnosis. Often indeed his cool blue eyes read life or death on a patient's face by sheer instinct, before careful investigation had begun. His home manner was generally kind and gentle. He had thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated all the comforts of a well managed household, and a bountiful and delicate table, and if he was beginning to accept these now as a mere matter of course, absent-mindedly, without a word, or look, or smile of acknowledgment, only one person was as yet conscious of the change.

In Daphne Keith, little Daphne-May Keith, and Olive Marr, are found the additional occupants of the old house. Daphne, her loveliness undimmed, her splendid sapphire eyes still mist-

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ily tender when they turn upon Philip. Baby Daphne-May—a loving, tender little soul, whose purple-blue eyes lacked the ever rising glints and sparkles of light, that made so jewel-like her beautiful mother's eyes; a baby with the mother's rippling hair clouding about the wee face, that yet bears a strange illusive resemblance to Philip Keith; a resemblance not to be traced and pinned down to any special feature that sought carefully disappears, only to spring forth with startling prominence at a casual glance; such a resemblance as is ever precious beyond words to the mother who has been an adoring wife.

Olive Marr, whose shallow plainness of face was accentuated by the unbecoming black she still wore in memory of her mother's death, was permanently established in the Keith menage. "Cousin Philip," as she habitually called him, had, with Daphne's consent, kept the promise made three years before to the devoted mother; whose slow dying through the long years had yet ended in a great shock, at the suddenness of her taking off, for her life had gone out as swiftly as a candle's flame might have passed in a strong draught.

It had been fortunate for all that Daphne's mistaken idea of the girl's age had been corrected before this grave happening. During

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their honeymoon Philip had often spoken of his "child ward," of the "little girl Olive" ever threatened with complete orphanage, of the "small romp" whose games he had shared; and his continual use of some diminutive caused Daphne to mentally picture Olive as the delicate, bright child of nine or ten years, instead of a tall, somewhat farouche young person between fifteen and sixteen, whom she felt obliged to greet as "Miss Marr" at their first meeting; while hiding the illustrated "Alice in Wonderland" she had brought as a supposedly suitable gift, and only offering the ribbon-tied box of bon-bons.

That "Miss Marr" had been as balm to the hurt pride of the girl, who was irritated to positive bad temper by continual allusions to her youth and childishness. Struck into parted-lip, silent wonder by the radiant beauty of Philip's wife, the girl at last burst out, "Mr. Belden was right when he told mama you were the loveliest woman outside of Paradise! And you said, Philip, that cousin Daphne only had the beauty of perfect health! And you told a wicked story! Why, our cook has perfect health, and-er-well, perhaps you'd like to have a look at her style of beauty?"

Before that summer visit had ended Cousin Marr had found a moment of privacy in which



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she jestingly remarked to Philip, "Ah, well, my boy, you were not lacking in assurance when you chose this wonderful girl for a wife. She loves you, too. Oh, be worthy of her, dear! Keep your affection in evidence. Ah, do not laugh! Women with silvered heads no longer have lovers, but we have memories. We have suffered and we know many things, and I tell you when familiarity breeds indifference to a wife's fairness and love; when a husband's praise dies out; when his dear flatteries are ended, the ordinary woman hides her wounded pride or grief or shame. With trembling hands she folds away forever all the precious webs of sentiment, of romantic love, and endures neglect silently to the far or near end. But a woman who is blessed or cursed with such incredible beauty cannot act like the ordinary wife. Oh, I am hinting nought against your wife's innate goodness and worth. Only Philip, remember the whole race of men stand ready to fill beauty's ears with courtly flatteries, and make her forget a husband's neglect.

"With a rarely lovely creature like your Daphne 'to have' is not all, you must 'hold' as well. A word of approval, of compliment, of debonnaire and gracious love, will hold her to you as with hooks of steel. Then speak them, my boy, speak often as the years creep on. Do

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not you be the one to turn that rare beauty into a snare for others, and a curse for herself!"

Dr. Keith was conscious of a sense of annoyance with the extreme beauty that brought upon him such a preachment. Just as he had been annoyed abroad by the murmur that had ever followed Daphne's progress through a crowd, whether in a theatre's foyer, at a picture gallery or at the races; that unbuyable murmur that men of leisure and of the world gladly pay for with such souls as they have left—holding it to be the hall-mark of the world's recognition of a woman's beauty, and a man's good taste.

But to the practical Philip it was silly and it was annoying, making a man feel conspicuous; and truth to tell he was just a trifle bored with the extreme beauty that aroused so much comment, and now he answered with a somewhat forced lightness of tone, "Dear Cousin Marr, Daphne is one of those women of cool and perfect poise, who can accept all and give nothing."

Mrs. Marr smiled a little sadly, while nodding her head, and answering "Yes, while they are sure of marital love. Not till she begins to doubt her husband does a wife stumble."

And then much exclaiming and laughter had broken forth, as Daphne and Olive returned from a stolen visit to Mrs. Marr's dressing table. Olive swept courtesies to her mother and Philip,

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with her reddish-brown mane of hair turned up as nearly as possible after the fashion of Daphne's artistic coiffure

Her slim little neck looked too weak to sustain such a weight, and when her mother told her it was quite impossible for her to be permitted to wear her hair up yet, she sighed and retorted, she didn't care much as her neck was not pretty at the back like Cousin Daphne's. Then pointing at a tiny golden-brown, velvety mole, showing on the magnolia white throat just beneath Daphne's ear the incorrigible Olive cried: "See, she has every gift in the world—even to the Devil's beauty mark—a mole!"

"Why Olive!" and Mrs. Marr appealed to the ceiling, "Oh, and is this what our children learn from their convent teachers!"

And Olive with her hands behind her, in recitation pose, answered: "No, dear mama, this is what the children learn at convents, but not from sister teachers. Girls learn most from other girls. Why, I taught a whole class what you said once, 'about dimples being Cupid's finger marks,' and we had the biggest dimple hunt afterwards, you ever—"

But Philip's laughter drowned further confidences; and Daphne's annoyance at what had first seemed like a senseless deception about Olive's age, passed with it—though she felt a

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faint touch of surprise, when Mrs. Marr having called Olive to say good-bye, the girl after an instant's hesitation kissed Philip twice with great energy, and as they drove away Daphne remarked, "There is a somewhat womanly ardor in that 'little girl's' endearments."

And Philip answered, "Oh, she parted from me in a huff, and that is just the babyish way of reinstating me in her good graces—that's all."

Now Olive was eighteen and a permanent member of the Keith family. She was still angular; she had handsome chestnut hair and brown eyes, that were quick, alert, bright, and when she felt well, merry. She had a wide, wonderfully expressive mouth but instead of being fair with the milky whiteness that goes naturally with such coloring as hers, she had the sallowness of ill-health, the pale lips of an anaemic, and though the doctor often treated her for dyspepsia, sleeplessness, neuralgia and the like, it was only Daphne's proud, calm eyes, that took note of a secret emotional unrest—feverish, hectic, that made Olive's manner changeable, uncertain, running from extravagant hilarity to sudden depression

She was not pretty; her character was as yet undeveloped, as was her figure. She was often guilty of small vulgarities, but as they were entirely of manner, not vulgarities of nature,

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they were held to be curable. And yet with all this Daphne felt some dangerous quality in the girl, some impish power to influence people to do her will. She showed a strange lack of delicacy and reserve in her bearing toward Philip, whom she cousined *ad nauseam*, and whose comings and goings she, at eighteen, still emphasized by the embraces familiar to her in childhood; save on occasions of her frequent inexplicable anger, which in one instance at least Daphne had traced to the witnessing by Olive of an unusual demonstration of tenderness toward his wife by Philip.

In binding Daphne's ankle with wet bandages for a slight strain, unaware of Olive's watchful eyes, he had held the lovely little member between his hands a moment, then brushing his lips once or twice across the instep, said: "Daphne, your's is the only perfect human foot I have ever seen." And Olive had flounced away, and for days had kept her room demanding unending attentions from Philip, who finally told her she would be a hypochondriac by the time she was twenty, if she went on yielding herself up utterly to every fancied ill.

A word of blame, of disapproval from the doctor reduced the girl to abject misery. Tears rushed to her eyes. "You never despised mama for being ill!" she cried petulantly.

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"Your mother fought against disease with splendid courage for long years, but you, Olive, you welcome it in whatever form it assumes. You have no organic trouble, and if you had a motive strong enough to stiffen your will, and hold you to the purpose, you could attain to health with all its joys and triumphs. Honestly," he added, teasingly, with laughter crinkling about his eyes, "honestly, Olive, it would be hard to find a man brave enough to marry a *malade imaginaire*."

Her cheeks flushed hotly and gave her a momentary prettiness, while with a curling lip she entreated him not to lose any sleep over the question of her marriage, probable or improbable. "At all events in the case you mention, I shall not be reduced to the necessity of 'hole in the corner' sickness; to the hiding of my illness, lest I should lose the reputation of 'perfect health,' and its attending charms."

For the first time in his life the doctor looked at the girl with cold disapproval. "A very sapient speech, no doubt, but will you kindly explain to one who is too dull to follow your lead, what member of my family is hiding illness, please?"

Olive set her lips together tight and hard, and was silent.

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"You cannot mean the Professor, since the entire household is policed under a system of laws administered by himself. Baby Daphne-May—if you mean her, you will again be out of your reckoning. Neither the clear pallor of her skin, nor the slender delicacy of her body suggest illness to the medical eye. She is as sound as a nut, and really I can't quite believe that even you consider my wife is under the necessity of hiding her illness?"

"Huh, the medical eye!" cried Olive, in contemptuous tones, that were nevertheless very near to tears. "Abroad it may be a very piercing optic, but at home—oh, well, when did ever a milliner wear a decent hat, or a cobbler have anything but broken shoes!"

"Keep to the point please," frowned Philip, "Who is hiding an illness in this house?"

"Well, I should not have called it an illness perhaps, but if Daphne was anyone else's wife you would see plainly enough that she is ailing. I don't know how you can sit at table with her and not see how she just plays with her food. She don't eat, and she don't walk half as much as she used to, and she's as nervous as a cat now, and I always thought she had been made without nerves. And you may be as mad as you please, but I know Cousin Daphne fainted in her room the other day, though Lena, Daphne-

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May's nurse denied it up and down. So there, now, isn't that hiding sickness?"

A slow color had risen in the doctor's face as he listened. "Oh, is that all?" he said, and sat staring at the floor. Then all his vexation of manner gone, he brought a bottle of cologne from the toilet table and began to bathe Olive's forehead; who broke into sudden choking sobs, and accused him of "despising her because she was sick!"

And he acknowledged he was ashamed of having teased her, and finally left her comforted with a kiss on her cheek.

But he began to watch his wife with clear, wide-open eyes, and was secretly mortified that an untrained girl had observed certain changes in her health and habits that his trained and experienced eyes had wholly ignored. What he saw gave him considerable food for thought.

He had recently been laying plans to attend a certain great Medical Congress in London; his very heart was set upon it. The mere meeting of such world-famous men would be equal to a liberal education; and with a thrill of pride he thought of the invitation extended him, to read a paper before that august body. The honor was so great, so precious that he muttered aloud "I must—I must go! And yet there is Daphne. If my suspicions are correct, there is



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Daphne to consider. Why need these two important matters have been tossed into my life together like this!"

At any other time the suspicion now held to be troublesome would have been welcomed with delight, for no matter how fond and proud he was of his small daughter, after the immemorial custom of mankind he longed for a babe male, a creature that need not moult the Keith name at marriage, but retain it all his life, and perhaps multiply the name in the land.

Why could not Daphne be like other women? Why could she not conquer the anguished terror of maternity, that shook her very soul with nameless fears. A weakness that seemed a direct inheritance from her own mother, whose morbid fears had led to enforced restraint before Daphne's birth. Daphne, who loved children with passionate tenderness, whose very life seemed centered in her own, yet at prospective motherhood was seized with such fear as fairly threatened her reason.

Practical, unimaginative man that he was, he yet shivered as he recalled the wild look in her blue eyes, even when she strove hardest for self-control. How only in the shelter of his arms she had secured a little peaceful sleep. How day after day, he returned to see her face pressed against the window glass in ceaseless

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watching; her one dominant thought all the day, and every day being, "When will he come?"

He remembered how he had sat at her feet, leaning against her knee, and reading aloud her favorite books; happy in bringing her temporary surcease of terror. How he had taken her for quiet moonlight drives, with an arm slipped secretly about her waist; how close and necessary had been his watch and ward over his suffering girl wife. And now he was considering the possibility of leaving her to face a like condition alone, for at least six weeks. To a twinge of self-reproach, he answered mentally, "Granddad can keep an eye upon her, and Lena is an experienced nurse, and six weeks is so short a time."

Then recalling some endlessly long, soul, tossed days, and nights of prayerful struggle, against uncanny caprice, he had the grace to recoil for a moment from his plan, and with a sense of surprise he realized how far away those lover-like days seemed; to what an extent he was living a life wholly his own, when he could thus hesitate between his wife's welfare, and the gratification of his professional ambition.

The leading of that separate existence had long been known to Daphne, who having put her whole life into her rapturous love for him, had struggled piteously to merge that life with

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his; was indeed still struggling, though more faintly, finding herself ever baffled.

However, the doctor, who never met trouble half way, let the matter drop until his suspicions became certainties, or were dispelled. Meantime the chatter of Olive, who let no domestic matter pass her by, had informed him that the Professor had called down Cousin Daphne's lovely plan of building a tiny little conservatory, out from the extension. "And I guess that's why she wasn't down to luncheon to-day."

"She said nothing to me about it," said the doctor.

Of course she wouldn't—she won't squabble over anything any more than a queen would. She wouldn't invite two people to set down on her for the same cause. But the idea of grumbling over the cost of a bit of a thing like that, that would be a pleasure to the whole family!

The doctor's thoughts flew to the expenses of his impending trip abroad, still he promised himself a heart to heart talk with the Professor—IF?

Meantime any one must have perceived the increasing languor of Daphne's movements, and her significantly capricious moods, most noticeable in a woman ordinarily noted for perfect poise. Reserved and proud, she was at the same time abnormally sensitive. Indeed she

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was a sort of human snail, and at every shock to her sensitiveness she withdrew into her shell of silence, whether it was a check put upon her own personal ambition, or a too bold expression of admiration for her beauty from one of her husband's friends, or the irritating guard kept by the Professor over the family exchequer. There was never a whimper of complaint, never a spurt of anger, never any "last word" tactics, only the natural impulse to hide her wounded feelings behind the proud, cold reticence, that in a less beautiful and refined woman might have been called sullenness.

The old Professor had once said of her to Doctor Philip, "My granddaughter, Daphne, has all the fine sweet coldness of a delicate mould of ice cream." And Philip had jestingly replied, "Yes, but Daphne's sweet coldness lacks the melting quality."

"You have no cause to complain, sir," said the Professor. "She melts quickly enough for you, but the rest of us are forced into the ranks of that army of heroes, that only 'stand and wait' for the melting period. But let me tell you, such proud dignity is a mighty good trait in a wife of unusual beauty. How would you like her to have Olive's temper of everlasting snap and splutter?"

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"Oh, that is Olive's miserable physical condition that speaks through her childish malice"—protested the doctor.

"Well," demanded the elder man, "can't you induce her to change her ways? She has not one single, wholesome, healthful habit. She feeds her system with drugs, as a stoker feeds an engine with coal, by the shovelful. Unless she can acquire health, she—well, she has the making of a regular 'nag,' and I'd rather see the girl dead than have her develop into a nagging woman!"

As the days passed Dr. Keith strove vainly to contrive some simple and natural way of sharing with his wife the momentous information he knew would come to her as a shock. She, herself, unconsciously made an opening for him. They were laughing at the absurd name of "Broadview" given by one of their acquaintance to a flat little cottage not far from their summer home; placed in a close wood, without a view of any kind, and almost without air.

In answer to his question, Daphne had answered, "Oh, I should be allowed no latitude of choice, if I had the naming of a place. It would of sheer necessity be a case of 'meet me at Phillipi.' Isn't it odd how my life is all

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wound about with that name. Your cousin was a Philip—your father was Philip—you are Philip—and though I don't believe you remember the fact, my father's name was Philip too?"

"Then! exclaimed the doctor, with genuine enthusiasm, "that will be the baby's name—if it's a boy!"

For a moment Daphne stood as if turned to stone. Her ghastly face flamed red then paled again. Her two hands fluttered up to her breast, and at that familiar gesture of suffering Philip opened his arms, and she flung herself into their shelter crying, "I'm frightened, Philip! I'm frightened! Oh, take care of me! Take care of me!"

Shaking and trembling like an aspen she clung with a strangling embrace about his neck, and as he stroked her hair with tender magnetic touch and kissed her brow and lips, and murmured words of courage and endearment, in a sub-conscious way he sought and found the excuse that would ensure his trip abroad, in the solemn declaration that he had promised to go before this knowledge had come to him.

He knew pride would seal her lips; there would be no entreaties, no scenes; but he knew too what she would suffer. Still he felt she would be well guarded. He would be very careful and devoted after he came home. At

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all events there was nothing to gain by further disturbing her mind now. He was in high good humor, and Daphne almost believed she had found her lover again.

Next morning after the ladies had left the breakfast room, Dr. Keith lowered his paper a moment, and looking across at the Professor said, "I believe, sir, you objected to a plan of Daphne's to throw out a small bit of a conservatory here?"

"Lord, yes!" answered the Professor, with his brows racing up and down his forehead. "Whims, fads! Women are full of them, but they never know the cost of anything!"

"Do you know the cost of this fad?" asked the doctor, dryly. "Though you could hardly condemn the expense before you saw the plans, and had an estimate of the probable cost?"

"I don't need any estimate to inform me it would be a foolish and useless thing. The idea—a conservatory out there!" and he shook out the match flame spitefully, after lighting a cigar.

His piercing old eyes glared across straight into the coolly smiling, blue eyes of his grandson—who folding his arms on the table, said significantly, "Useless—a conservatory useless? I don't know about that, Granddad. It would be a capital nice place to sun a baby in—eh?"

The old eyebrows became suddenly station-



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ary, the eyes stared—then softened. The Professor rose stiffly and coming around the table grasped Philip's hand, and smiling all over his crabbed old face, he said eagerly, "Let's send for the fellow that draws the plans!"



## CHAPTER IV.

### A WAITING GAME.

On the morning of Dr. Keith's departure from home—the Professor alone accompanied him to the steamer, because of his dislike for public leave taking. He had had a private word with Lena before calling a gay good-bye to Mrs. Clutterbuck, old Page and the rest of the small domestic force in his employ. His real parting with his wife had taken place above stairs; yet when he saw Olive, with one hand pressed to a neuralgic temple, her sallow face tear-streaked, waiting at the front door to say good-bye, he felt a sudden desire to see Daphne's fair face the last of all, and called loudly up to her to come to him.

As she descended, little Daphne-May clinging to her softly falling, pale blue gown, Philip turned to Olive, saying as he held out his hand, "Well, little girl, it is good-bye again!"

As she caught the offered hand between both of hers, she leaned her head against his breast. He bent toward her, then with a sudden, loud,

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"Faugh!" he drew violently back, exclaiming, "Good God, Olive, how you smell of drugs!"

The girl's face literally flamed. She caught one or two sobbing breaths, then protested, "It's—it's only a little salol powder that got scattered on my dress! I can't help its scent lasting so long!"

"Better do without medicine if you can't handle it more certainly!" the doctor sharply answered. "A young girl should suggest the odor of flowers, rather than the compounding alcove of a prescription counter!"

"Oh—oh!" she gasped in speechless pain and rage, while the doctor returning to his smiling demeanor, coaxed, "There, don't let us part in anger again, child."

He slipped his arm lightly about her shoulders, and felt her slim body stiffen like to a ram-rod. "Come say good-bye, and good luck!"—as he bent to kiss her cheek.

But she jerked her head away. "No!" she said with sardonic smoothness, "No—I should not like to offend your delicate senses again. The kiss can wait until I have acquired 'the beauty of perfect health!' Then it may be welcomed rather than endured!"—and with quivering lips she flung away from him into the darkest corner of the library.

The doctor stooped and held out his arms for

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Daphne-May, then raised himself erect with the little one clinging to him limpet-like, with all the power of small arms and legs.

As he stood so Daphne, standing on the stairs behind them, felt stamped upon her brain one of those mental photographs that never fade while life lasts; a picture so sharp, so clear, yet so maddeningly disappointing in the time to come, because both dear faces were hidden. She saw the straight, strong young figure of her husband, the close cropped brown hair with the queer little irregular wave showing in spite of close cutting and savage brushing, the contraband crinkle that she as Daphne Cuyler had secretly, blushing longed to smooth with lingering fingers; and around his strong neck she saw the white arms and the small clutching hands of her baby girl.

At that moment Philip turned, and drew her to him, holding mother and child in one embrace, and catching the faint perfume of her hair, he rested his cheek against the deep-waved, silky mass, and whispered in a moved voice: "My treasures! My two dearest treasures!"

His wife raised slow eyes, and in their depths he read such dumb misery, that on a momentary impulse he cried. "Shall I give it all up, and stay—say the word, dear?"

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One moment color warmed her face—then it faded. A faint curl touched the short upper lip, that gave such a look of pride to the lovely mouth, and in an even, colorless voice, she answered, "With ambitious doctors science even takes precedence of family claims—so you go naturally."

Though assuming utter blindness to the sarcasm of the evenly spoken words, so contradictory to the woe of her eyes, a hot color flamed over the doctor's face. He was naturally a frank man, and even this slight pretence of hesitancy and regret annoyed him in the making, and he was grateful for the impatient call of Professor Keith, who, watch in hand, stood by the open hack door and swore with considerable skill considering his sedentary occupation.

Then the doctor kissed Daphne-May and said, "Dear, keep an eye on that cat Tummy. He seems to be developing a nasty temper. I wish the child was not so fond of him." And then he had held her silently in his arms, had kissed her, two quick, close kisses, put her aside, and dashed down the steps into the carriage and was off.

Daphne went to her room and fastened to the wall a calendar card, with pencil hanging by a ribbon, that it might be ready for the marking

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off of the slow-going days of Philip's absence. Then passing Daphne-May over to Lena's care, behind locked doors, the barriers of pride gave way.

Face down upon the bed, she wept and stormed, and beat the bed and her own breast with inadequate small fists, gasping for breath, utterly overwhelmed with wounded pride, disappointed love, baffled effort, mental terror and physical suffering. She had abandoned herself to one of those mad crises of the nerves that occasionally overpowers the proudly reticent woman, whose fine breeding forbids the wearing of her heart upon her sleeve "for daws to peck at." Who hides all passion, either of temper, jealousy or love, beneath a chill, calm endurance, until human nerves can bear no more, and fortitude ends in wild hysteria.

And strangely enough, Olive, below stairs, seemed to have changed natures with Daphne. For she, who usually betrayed every feeling, who knew naught of self-control, now sat through the long hours silent as a deaf mute, her eyes fixed in an unseeing stare, straight ahead. Daphne received the impression that the girl was trying to screw her courage to some undertaking.

Then one morning there appeared by Olive's plate a letter that seemed fairly to shout her

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name, so jetty black was the ink, so sprawlingly distinct the far reaching inscription. Olive's face flushed deeply as she noted the inquiring glance of Professor Keith, but she said nothing, and the letter remained unopened till she had left the table.

Another vociferous letter appeared, and this time the Professor looked it over before Olive came down. It bore a blurred postmark from somewhere in New York, and his old eyebrows raced up and down malevolently as he noted how strongly the envelope was impregnated with tobacco smoke.

"The little imp!" he muttered. "Beginning some correspondence with a piece of masculine impudence the very week of Dr. Philip's departure! Little cat! I wonder if he'll call her a baby now! I'll have to look into this matter!" But as usual Daphne had come closest to the correct reading of the girl's changed manner.

Philip Keith was to Olive the very axis upon which the whole earth turned. She had but the one ambition, to please Philip. In her dearest day dream she was quite well and strong, and Cousin Philip was telling her how pretty she had grown. A word of blame from him was torture to her. Again and again she had promised herself that she would be brave and obey orders and acquire regular habits, and go to bed

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early and get up early and exercise, and bathe and eat all by rule, and see if she would grow well and pretty. And then she would have neuralgia, and Cousin Philip would attend upon her so kindly, and soothe the pain with the thrilling magic of his touch, and—and, well, she never got any further toward acquiring those necessary habits.

But the cruel, plainly expressed disgust on Philip's face, as he cried: "Good God! how you smell of drugs!"—had shamed her to the soul. Her whole body burned under the ignominious memory. All day and half the night she kept repeating, "Never again! No, never again! He shall never sneer at my sick ugliness again! I'll see if what he says about acquiring health is true! He is a good doctor—he ought to know. And as for hard rules, I can bear anything easier than Cousin Philip's contempt. No one can stop me, while he's away, and so—"

And so, she who read the papers assiduously, had boldly written, describing her case, and condition, and temperament to the head of an establishment for the restoration of shattered nerves, flaccid muscles, worn out digestion. An establishment ruled without fear or favor, where exceptions were unknown, and coddling unheard of.

It was this very severity that appealed to her

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girlish extravagance and led her to choose the quiet retreat, directed by a man who was a prominent figure in athletic and pugilistic circles, in preference to those sanitariums presided over by doctors. Her argument was if this man can take a dissipated wreck, choked with fat, saturated with nicotine and liquor, his stomach merely a name, his nerves at loose ends, and in a matter of strenuous weeks stand him up again, clear-eyed, clear-skinned, hard and lean of flesh, with steady nerves, and strong free-moving muscles, then surely he can do as much for me, who am not dissipated, and am young and have no organic trouble.

"The Professor writes, that success or failure lies more with me than with him, that the case is simplicity itself; that in fact the whole matter narrows down to the question of courage.

"All right—I'm glad of it! I'll show Cousin Philip that mama didn't have all the pluck of the Marr family. But, oh, it will be hard not to spend the rainy days in bed, with a novel and a box of sweets, and to be denied the operating of lamp and coffee pot at any hour of the day or night.

"I imagine I will have need of all my pride to shore up my courage. But I'll take a try at physical culture, even though I drop asleep over



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my early quarter-ounce breakfast, and am battered black and blue learning to ride horseback. I'm eighteen; in Cousin Philip's absence no one can stop me, and to avoid argument, I'll just slip away to-morrow with a couple of bags, and they can send my trunk after me."

A plan she carried out to the letter. She left a business-like statement for the old Professor, saying where she had gone; telling him he could easily satisfy himself as to Professor M's character and standing, and of his success in renovating worn and disordered humanity. That Saturday was visiting day; that she would need no money till after Doctor Philip's return, and she was his affectionate—Olive.

To Daphne she wrote tersely—"I have gone away to acquire health. If I succeed, I will come home again—if I fail, someone will send me home—Olive."

In the weeks that followed Daphne was thankful to escape the unintentional, but ceaseless espionage of Olive's alertly observant eyes, and interested herself as much as possible in the drawings and specifications for the conservatory, that Professor Keith now hurried on, and fretted over, because it wasn't to be bigger than a sheet, and the work was not to be begun until the family had gone to Highlawn upon Philip's return.

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One morning when the two Daphnes had come in from a stroll in the small park, which at that time each family whose house faced upon it held a key, Mrs. Keith summoned Clutterbuck to the brief daily consultation anent dinner and household matters generally, and was startled to see blood trickling slowly from deep scratches, reaching from elbow to wrist, and many slighter ones crossing and recrossing over the back of her hand.

"Why, what in the world has happened?" she cried, pressing her soft bit of a handkerchief to the long wounds, her mind flying antisepticward. "Have you broken a window with too hard rubbing, or what, Louisa?"

"No, Mrs. Keith—it isn't no window—and it isn't no matter. It's only me that's clawed by that devil of a cat Tummy. Me that's fed him all his black life! He walked on to my bread, all covered warm and comfortable for risin', and I pitched him off, and he hitched up his back, and greened his eyes, and flew at me. I put out my hand to hold him off, and he tore me good before I shook him off, and threw a pail of water on him—and now just look at him, not dry yet, and laying on his cushion in the sun like a gentleman."

Daphne-May ran and put her soft little hands each side of the impish black face, and ques-

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tioned: "Why, Tummy, do cats have to be bad sometimes dis like little girls are? Poor Tummy!"—and this childish sympathy with inherent cattish wickedness, made both women laugh.

But after Clutterbuck's scratches had been attended to, Daphne begged the little one to cease carrying Tummy about so much in her arms, since he was growing heavy, and sagging down so might make him cross enough to scratch her.

The child promised reluctantly, saying, "Tummy always stretched out like that when he was carried, and though she knew he had pins in his feet, he never scratched her with 'em, not once." And Daphne kissed the earnest, small face, whispering, "Loyal, little soul!"—and so let the matter rest.

Next day among Daphne's letters was one that had either been most carelessly blotted or exposed to a wetting, for the address was almost illegible. She opened it and read it at the table, and her color varied so rapidly from white to cruel red, and back to white again and red, that the ever watchful old man opposite, had cleared his throat, and asked curtly, "Anything wrong?"

And she had slightly raised her beautiful sweeping brows, and in the cold sweet tone he had come in some way to associate with hidden

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pain, answered: "Anything wrong?—no-er-not in a man's eyes," and he ventured no further.

But little Daphne-May was sent that morning to walk with Lena, while her mother re-read one of those daring fool letters, idle women so often write doctors, and actors in particular.

The communication had been meant for the doctor, the writer addressed him at one point as "You too perfectly delightful wretch!" and accused him of "incredible unkindness in not even acknowledging her gift, that she had intended for his own use at the office. And it was such a splendid piece of French bronze, and did he not see the famous name that signed it? He was not to dare to be too proud to accept it, as it was not worth half the value of that exquisite rose he had robbed himself of for her sake, etc."

Daphne recalled perfectly the morning when she had placed an exquisite rose in her husband's button hole, and with eyes dull with pain she recalled his expressed regret for the breaking off of the rose's too heavy head, though she had found no stem in the button hole, as she should have done had he spoken the truth.

And this is what he had done with her gift. Well, it was a small matter, only would Philip Keith have passed to another woman a rose given him by Daphne Cuyler? And she an-

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swered herself with absolute certainty, "Never! Never! almost he would have died first!"

Yet now—and she was not changed, a gift from him was still sacred; a word of love thrilled Daphne Keith, just as it had thrilled Daphne Cuyler. He was changed—but why? And like thousands of other young wives before her, she wondered tormentedly, why she was losing the radiant happiness of that first year and a half; where she was in fault; wondered if all men went out into the world and forgot; if all women remained at home and remembered?

Mrs. Allingham—the writer of the extravagantly worded letter ended, by asking, "If her dear overworked doctor could not slip away quietly, and enjoy a few hours of absolute rest, as his professional and family cares and profound studies were bound to wear him quite out—so her poor late husband had said many a time."

Daphne's lip curled as she wrote across the blemished envelope: "Opened by mistake"—and signed the sentence, "Mrs. Philip Galbraith Keith," and enclosing it in a fresh envelope, addressed, stamped, and tossed it on the hall table for Page's attention.

When Philip returned, he had been startled by the change a month and a half of loneliness, of sorrowful introspection, of sleepless nights,

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mental terrors and the steady performance of her housewifely duties had wrought in Daphne. The glittering blue splendor of her eyes looked almost wild in the tense drawn face, scarce larger now than the child's, and he remorsefully promised himself to use all his knowledge, skill and love to restore her to her normal self.

Absurd as it seemed, he was most moved by a piteous little habit, unconsciously acquired, of pushing, continually pushing, with the tip of her thumb, at the loose hanging wedding ring, that ever slipped forward to be ever pushed back again.

After that first home dinner, Dr. Keith remained below stairs for a smoke and a somewhat lengthy chat with the Professor. He reported briefly on his real triumph abroad; touched upon the work done by the Congress of Doctors, and added that he made a lightning trip to Paris, to meet a mighty specialist on nervous diseases, and one afternoon passing through the Bois, his attention had been attracted by an exceptionally perfect four-in-hand, with an exaggeratedly gay crowd on board, and in the driver's seat saw Stanley Belden, who had surprised him by instant recognition and salute.

"Ah, yes," snapped the Professor, "just so much dead wood, that chap. Too bad—too bad!

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I knew his father before him, a fine man, sir. I knew Stanley, too, twenty-four or five years ago. If he had had family and education only, he would have done something, for the fellow was a born diplomat, and he could have played the great game with the best. But no, his cursed money ruined him. It is a great power, money; it brings out all the good or all that is bad in the man that owns it. And, by the Lord, as near as I can see, it has made a refined sensualist of Stanley Belden."

Then Olive's move came up for discussion, and the older man urged his grandson not to visit her, lest her determination to remain some weeks longer be shaken. He had been out to see her twice, and had been amazed by the improvement in her condition. "She danced about boasting that she slept without the help of a little trional, and says she's nearly always hungry, and that lunch and dinner time always finds her with a watch in her hand, counting the last minutes of waiting."

"And I tell you what, Philip, their rules are stiff. I don't believe many of the late Medes and Persians would have cared to board there, and face the routine. I tell you that girl deserves credit for her firmness of purpose. She claims what she calls Marr courage, and I made her as mad as a hatter, by telling her her's was

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Henderson courage. For I'm hanged if the girl has not nearly forgotten she is the daughter of Oliver Henderson, and not of the blood of Keith Marr, my dead grandson and her step-father."

"Yes," smiled the doctor, "Olive is a biased little partisan, and utterly devoted to the Keith-Marr faction, and as she can't possibly remember her own father, I think she is excusable"—and with cheery good nights the two men separated.

As the doctor entered the large upper chamber, he stopped short. Directly opposite stood the twin bedsteads, and stretched across the foot of them was a pillow piled couch, on which Daphne lay with the pale clear light of a reading lamp falling softly over the outspread, billowy hair and sleeping face.

Wrapped only in delicate night garments and silk kimona, whose beautiful embroideries shone gemlike in the clear light, all her loveliness lay supine and adrowse. A heelless Turkish slipper dropping loosely from one overhanging foot, one hand resting on an open book, one arm from which both sleeves had fallen back, cast bare and white above her dark head, the curved black lashes clung closely to her pale cheeks, while in the whiteness of her face the red mouth glowed like a scarlet flower.



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As he looked down at her Philip came nearer to a full appreciation of her rare beauty than he had ever done before. He recalled having said to her, "I love you because you are you, not because of any beauty"—and now he wondered if she had thought him a prig?

There was something so pathetic in the suggested helplessness of this utter abandon, and he turned restively away from one or two recently acquired memories, and sinking down on a tambour at the couch's side, he drew tenderly down the perfectly moulded arm, and stroking it from shoulder to finger tip murmured, "Dearest little woman"—then, half laughingly, "Is this mere doctor's wife a flawless beauty then?"

The heavy lashes were lifted just enough to show a line of sapphire blue. Daphne was in no wise fluttered or flattered. She had an artist's calm appreciation of her good gifts that was a thousand miles from vanity; but when he whispered again that "Dearest little woman," she turned and pressed her lips to his brow, as he leaned against the many colored pillows, and whispered to herself:

"I cannot merge my life in his, but he can enter my world at will. Oh, help me keep him there; I don't want to be a thing apart, dependent upon his bounty. I want his love, his confidence, his companionship! Dear God, help

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me not to lose the way. Man's married life follows such perplexing paths, the labyrinth is intricate and hard to trace without the clue; and if pure love be not it, then I am lost, and cannot follow where my husband leads!"

Weeks passed at Highlawn—happy weeks in spite of Daphne's nervous terrors. Then Philip thought it best to return to the city home, to await his wife's hour of trial.

And lo, all unannounced, Olive had returned also, and stood in the hallway to give them rapturous greeting and welcome. A new Olive, of milky skin, pink lips, pink cheeked, of dancing eyes, and quick, elastic movements, full of joy and laughter, and the chatter of a dozen parrots.

"Olive, you are wonderful!" exclaimed Daphne, as she kissed the girl on both cheeks; while Daphne-May with wide eyes announced solemnly, "I didn't know anybody but little girls and cats growed, but Cousin Olive's growed, hasn't she, papa?"

Through the laughter that followed, Dr. Philip cried, as he held the young girl's hands, "By Jove, you have, Olive! You've grown, and straightened, and rounded, and you are as pretty as a peach!"—and laughingly he kissed her. But Olive flushed to the roots of her hair, and Daphne saw the blush.

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That night Dr. Keith sent his wife upstairs directly after dinner, telling her he would join her in fifteen or twenty minutes, at latest. But he had reckoned without his ward, Olive.

She was describing with grim humor her past six weeks' campaign against neuralgia, insomnia, and migraines of all sorts, and presented such ludicrous pictures of some of her companions in like trouble, that the laughter of the men reached the lonely woman above stairs, and it was only after Olive had jingled off a common minstrel song of the day, while Philip leaned over the piano, that she suddenly sprang up, exclaiming, "Gracious me! Cousin Daphne loathes such songs! I hope she's asleep, and has not heard me"—that Philip realized his twenty minutes had stretched to two hours.

His excuses were accepted with that careful politeness with which Daphne strove to hide her hurt, and that, had she but known it, irritated him more than any violent expression of feeling would have done.

For weeks Daphne was fed on Olive's praises; her courage, her tenacity of purpose, her wonderful improvement in character and physique.

At last the hoped for baby son arrived, but his advent was followed by a serious illness for Daphne, that caused much anxiety to them

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all. Many hours were passed by her in a semi-delirious condition in which she was obsessed with the belief that Philip had already married Olive, and had made her mistress of the house and step-mother to her babes. And she would weakly implore him to take her hand and convince himself that she was not yet dead, and wrung his heart by the pleadings that he would not neglect the children for Olive's sake.

The old Professor, who heard some of these wanderings, cast piercing glances at Philip, while his brows raced up and down. "Had you any suspicion of this mental disturbance?" he asked sharply.

"None in the least," replied the doctor, "Daphne has always made Olive welcome here."

"Um," mumbled the old man. "Yet her constant presence has evidently had an irritating, or a depressing effect upon your wife's mind. Perhaps Olive is rather aggressively at home here. We look upon her as a child, but to Daphne's eyes she is a young woman, whose familiarities may be annoying."

"Good heaven, sir, you don't imagine Daphne, with all her pride, to be capable of small jealousies?" cried Philip.

"No, but that very pride may move her to a greater jealousy. At all events, my boy, if Daphne recovers, we should try to relieve her

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from the constant presence of Olive."

"Yes," agreed the doctor, "I'll try and arrange for her to join some party making a tour abroad."

"It would be better still for all hands if she should join some decent young fellow in a matrimonial life tour."

And then there came to them the weary incessant entreaty, "Don't Philip, don't hold her in your arms while I am alive. Put your hand upon my cheek and feel my tears. Dead women do not cry, dear—not even for those they leave behind! Oh, how well it would be if I could die now!"

And neither man breathed "Amen" because they had no thought that she spoke with the lips of prophecy.

## CHAPTER V.

### A HINT OF TRAGEDY.

One morning as the family sat at breakfast, the doctor glanced hurriedly over the headlines of his paper, and while Daphne poured a second cup of coffee for him, "Young Mr. Keith," as the Professor invariably called the new baby, tied securely in his high chair, seized that moment of freedom from a mother's restraining and guiding hand, and clutching his spoon like a club, with gurgles of delight, he first beat the empty air with it, then made vague unsuccessful passes at his open mouth, and finally plunged the spoon aimlessly into the milky contents of his small porringer.

"Here you, Mr. Keith," roared the Professor, "you need to be sent away for a good lot of target practice before you are turned loose at the table again!"

And Olive laughingly interrupted with, "I don't know about that, Professor. It seems that baby's aim at your shirt front was entirely successful!"

Daphne-May, small peacemaker, laid a hand

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on the old man's arm saying, "Please great-dad, he's so little. When he comes big like me he will know right where his mouf is, and will put all his breakfass in it, and not spoil anybody's shirt front any more!"

"W—well," replied the old man doubtingly, "If you really believe he will eventually know where to find his mouth, perhaps we had better not send him away for target practice, without giving him a fair chance." At which the loving little maid ran round to kiss her small brother and tell him, "Not to be afraid, he wasn't goin' to be sent away."

Suddenly the doctor, who had breakfasted in the absent-minded silence now habitual with him, paused in the very act of rising, to say, "Oh, by the way, Daphne, at the club last night I made an engagement for you to-day, for four o'clock. I came near forgetting it altogether."

"An engagement?" she repeated, surprisedly. "An engagement with whom?"

"With Belden. I told him you would enjoy a drive behind his really splendid four!"

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Olive, "how heavenly delightful!"

"Huh—you need not rejoice!" frowned the doctor. "You are not included in the invitation."

"But," she cried petulantly, clasping and un-

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clasping her hands, "Daphne can't go without someone to play propriety!"

"A—ah! well, perhaps you'll be surprised then to learn that Mr. Belden himself supplies the necessary chaperone in the person of his aunt, Mrs. Hartley Dunham. The small party being completed by the presence of Mr. Wyatt."

A slow color stained the warm whiteness of Daphne's face as she said, "It is, I think, Philip, both unwise and inconsiderate to make a positive engagement for another person without ascertaining whether it is agreeable or even possible. If you by chance had pledged me for to-morrow instead of to-day the position would have been embarrassing to us all, as I could not have fulfilled your promise."

"Why not, pray?" he inquired.

"Because Friday is my reading day for my poor people, who expect me as surely as the day dawns."

"Those old things that you spend all your pocket money on?" broke in Olive. "A little tobacco or snuff, a little tea now and then," smiled Daphne. "You are not complimentary to Philip's generosity when you think my allowance can cover only such small expenditures."

"Well, if you would sacrifice a ride on the top of a fine private coach for the sake of a few



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grumpy, complaining old people's wishes, you're a greater fool than I took you for."

"Olive!" sharply interrupted the Professor, "if you cannot respect my granddaughter's wifehood and motherhood, try to at least remember that she is your hostess!"

Daphne bent over baby Philip, while the waitress, rattling with starch, helped untie him. The doctor stared at the Professor, then shrugged his shoulders slightly, and turned to take his hat and gloves from Page. But little Daphne-May crying, "Oh, let me Page—please let me!"—took the articles from his trembling old hands, and herself presented them to her father, who said, "Thanks, Page!" and was passing to the hall, when the child cried distressfully, "You didn't kiss me, papa!"

"Oh!" said he surprisedly, "why I thought you were Page, and I very seldom kiss him, you know"—a bit of nonsense that set the child agurgle with laughter.

Philip kissed his daughter tenderly, and again was starting forth when Daphne-May's voice again rose distressfully, "Papa—oh, papa! You're forgetting my pretty mama, and baby brother!"

At which Philip turned toward his wife, standing now at the foot of the stairs with baby in her arms, and passing his arm about her shoul-

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ders kissed the infant, then catching the watchful eye of Daphne-May, he brushed his wife's cheek with his lips and said, "I hope you'll enjoy your drive, it's a fine turnout."

"I would much more enjoy a ride with you in your professional one-horse turnout," she answered him, honestly.

"Ah, but I have no time to drive about with women—too many calls to make!" and he was off, and into his waiting buggy.

Daphne's face was calm enough, but that asked for kiss, so carelessly given, had set a hard tightness in her throat, that made speaking to Lena and Clutterbuck, and Mattie the waitress, a difficult task.

To her room Olive had followed her, saying, "The Professor thinks I owe you an apology."

"That is quite unnecessary," answered Daphne, a bit wearily.

"That's what I told him; because I was only using a common everyday figure of speech. One often says 'I'm not such a fool as I look,' or 'He's a bigger fool than I thought him.' It's a habit of speech, that's all. I had no intention of calling you a fool, believe me. Say, little one," turning to Daphne-May, "let's have a big game of romps while mama's out giving the afternoon promenaders a treat!"

"Oh, let's play Rob'son Crusoe?" pleaded the

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child. "Please say yes! Great-dad has got a lovely rug by his bed that'll make the island, and if you don't want to play Man-Friday baby brother will do, 'cause he can't talk anyway. And 'Scissors' can be the parrot, and Tummy—"

"No, Miss May," interrupted Lena, who had come for the children. "You must not have Tummy in the game if baby brother is in it. The nasty tempered beast don't seem to like little Mr. Keith."

"Never mind," comforted Olive, seeing and understanding the disappointment of Daphne-May, "I'll play the goat myself, and do it a lot better than Tummy would. Can I help you when you dress, Cousin Daphne? Won't you carry my lace parasol—it's real, you know, it belonged to mama?"

"Thank you, no, Olive, it might get a fall or an injury of some sort, and we would never forgive ourselves—one for the lending, the other for the borrowing."

Prompt to the moment the four-in-hand, with rattle and roll and prance, was brought up sharply before the old house on the square. Mr. Belden had come for Daphne first, that he might have a few precious moments alone with her before he picked up his aunt and Mr. Wyatt. With the men standing at the leaders' heads, he descended, and carrying some white papered

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parcels, mounted the old stone steps and rang the door bell.

As Page bowed him into the drawing room Mrs. Keith descended the stairs. Belden's eyes swept over her costume with swift approbation. He had a trained and perfect taste for costuming, for all the chiffons, fripperies, and jewels beloved of women, and no one was more contemptuous than he of the fallacious old assertion, "Beauty unadorned is adorned the most." And no one knew better than he what aids rich backgrounds and delicate accessories are to great natural charms. His swift approving eyes estimated the cost of her entire outfit at less than a rare handled sunshade of one of the women of his own set, and yet its effect on this imperially lovely woman satisfied even his exacting taste, and flattered his pride.

As he held her two gloved hands a delicious moment he caught his lip beneath sharp white teeth to check the quiver he knew was there, then turned and opened one box, taking out a lovely knot of yellow roses.

Pleasure began to send glints of light into her black-lashed sapphire eyes. "Oh!" she smiled, "how did you chance to choose yellow roses?"

"As you suggest—by mere chance, of course," he answered with gentle satire. Then waving his hand at the prevailing colors of the room

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and touching a fold of her yellow gown, he added, "When a lady shows her preference for a color no more plainly than this, it would indeed be surprising that a friend should observe that preference, and act upon it. Mistress Keith, you look like a pale pink flower in a field of ripe wheat."

He drew a couple of crystal headed pins from the flower box and offered them for her use; watching her arch her haughty throat after the manner of a proud young horse in her effort to place properly the flowers without the aid of a glass.

Swathed in soft corn color, the draped bodice of her favor gave to all her gracious curves a suggestion of the statuesque. There were touches of pink in the crushed rose crown of her picture hat, a lining of soft coral pink in the fluffy sunshade of corn colored net, and a long handle of pale coral, that, if only an imitation, was at least perfect in tint. All color receiving that final chic accent of black beloved by the French, in a few pert knots of velvet ribbon.

He was suddenly aware the sight of that imitation coral handle hurt him, as the sight of a child without shoes might hurt another with a more tender heart. He looked curiously at the lovely creature before him, wondering what a life of refined pleasure would mean to her. A

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swift, passionate longing came upon him to lift her high in the public eye; to surround her with all the princely accessories that wealth and art, and adoring love could command. He thought of her midnight triumphal passage through foreign opera houses; saw her at fetes-champetres in palace gardens, proving beneath the white light of open day her claim to a world moving beauty. He longed to give—to serve. And suddenly realized with amazement that in all this imagining there had actually been no thought of self—and he reddened at the discovery.

Daphne had taken up the other package and found it contained a box of bon-bons for Miss Marr, and a smaller one, gay with tiny ribbon-tied china dolls, for Daphne-May. She shook her head, and he started up, alert again to say: "Only pure white-rock and a few maroon glacés for the little one—nothing colored, I assure you—please let her have them."

She summoned Page and sent the boxes with Mr. Belden's compliments. Then turning to him, and noticing a slight abstraction, she picked up her parasol, and lightly asked, "Were you then sleeping with your eyes open?"

"Pardon me, no, not sleeping, but—well, dreaming with my eyes open. You indulge in the habit, perhaps?"

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"No!" she answered sharply. I dream no more—I have lost the power!" and turned and swept to the door, catching up her dust cloak in passing through the hall.

As Belden gathered up and drew the lines over the backs of his powerful black wheelers and mannerly bright bay leaders, he remarked, "We are a trifle late for our intended run over to Long Island, so we will content ourselves with a little jog through the Park and out to Claremont, and if you have a Christianlike desire to be very good, and sweet, and kind, you will make the tea for me out on the piazza overlooking the Hudson.."

She smiled doubtfully. "Your other guests may not share your yearning for tea."

"On the contrary. Wild horses could not hold Wyatt back from your brew, while Aunt Dunham, who thinks imitation the sincerest flattery, would joyfully repeat my order, if it were for sage or sassafras. So Mistress Keith, you will head my table for once at least."

There was a tone of triumph in his voice, and she raised proud eyes to his face, half expecting to find the expression she had so often seen there, in the first months after his return from Europe; an expression partly sensual, partly sinister, that had the power to half attract, even while it repelled. But there was only admiring

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courtesy in his slow dark eyes, for at the moment of checking the rhythmic beat of sixteen iron-shod hoofs before his own great house, where Mrs. Dunham and Wyatt awaited him, he looked down upon the proud beauty of the woman at his side and thought with what gracious dignity she could reign in a home like that. And a swift desire came to him to see the woman, for whom his longing was intensified by the knowledge that she was the last passion of his life, to see her moving through the great rooms of his splendid home. To see her white hands touching the yellowing keys of the noble old grand, looked down upon by the life-size portrait of his mother, with the fixed smile upon her lips that was so flatly contradicted by the infinite sadness in her eyes. A new desire was a thing to welcome; it would give him something to plan for.

He was at his stately, courteous best, as he entertained his small party; while Mrs. Dunham, splendid in olive green, polka-dotted silk, and much ecru lace, a girlish hat of straw massed with pink roses, crowning her snowy water waves, exchanged looks of amazement and inquiry with Willie Wyatt, wondering who the lovely stranger really was, and where she came from. But Wyatt, who was generally quick at putting this and that together, looked long at



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the intense sapphire blue of Daphne's eyes, and then recalled that strange curt cabled order, anent the making up of that yachting party, "For God's sake, no blue eyes!" and he began to understand.

To the woman of secure position in the highest social circles of her time and place, there are few things more obnoxious than the necessity of extending a courtesy to an outsider whose beauty, charm and breeding pass for naught so long as she moves outside the magic circle drawn about that set. Stanley Belden's will was his aunt's law, it is true, but many of us obey the law without loving it, and Mrs. Hartley Dunham had yielded with a distinctly chilly grace to her nephew's strange whim for entertaining some mere doctor's wife. But the distinction of Mrs. Keith's bearing, more even than her unusual beauty had somewhat reduced the frostiness of Mrs. Dunham's welcome, and on the piazza at Claremont, when at the arrival of a tea equipage, Daphne had made a little deprecating gesture toward the elder woman, she had graciously announced, "My hands have lost some of their steadiness, and my nephew Belden can't endure the rattling of cups, so pray, Mrs. Keith, make our tea for us."

Belden seemed wrapt in dreamy rapture, to his very finger tips he was conscious of Daphne's

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nearness. Her usual manner was one of proud melancholy, to-day glints of light were rising in her eyes from sheer pleasure. A new vivacity in her expression was like a new charm to his adoring eyes. Wyatt watching him, saw and read even his claiming smile, and a little sneer of comprehension came upon his mouth, a sneer that faded slowly as in turn he studied Daphne, and suddenly shaking the monocle from his eye, he muttered beneath his mustache, "Belden's Waterloo! by Jove."

Their chat, feather light, had turned upon colors, and Mrs. Dunham was saying, "I can't understand how Princess Alexandra can so successfully wear mauve. She is a blue-eyed woman, too, and that color kills all the healthy pink tint of one's flesh, leaving most people yellow as saffron."

"Mauve, mauve?" said Belden, "why should not the princess wear it successfully? I'm sure it is a most delicate and lovely tint."

"Ah!" cried Daphne, "You are caught tripping once, Mr. Belden. You have in mind the faint pinkish lavender color we call mauve, the princess wears the royal purple, that the English, justly I believe, name mauve. She must have an exquisite complexion to dare it."

"Well," inquired Wyatt, mournfully, "I'd like

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to know how a fellow is to tell mauve and lavender apart?"

"Very easily," laughed Daphne. "A gentleman might be induced to wear lavender trousers; but no power on earth could force him to accept mauve ones. In that way, my dear sir, you may always tell one from the other."

"Well," said Mrs. Dunham, "my color is green in every possible shade, sage or olive, emerald or willow. When I was young I was devoted to Nile or water green. And how one does cling to one's favorite color!"

"Alas, yes," smiled Daphne, "I can't cling to my best loved color, because I believe it to be as much a lost secret as is the famous *bleu-de-roi* of Sevres. I've possessed no gown of it myself, but in my mother's and grandmother's time peach blossom pink, in satin and silk, was held to be the acme of fashion; and the Cuylers and Lawtons who ruffled it at Savannah then with the best, trailed their peach blossom pink satins right royally."

"Savannah! Savannah!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunham. "Lawtons! Cuylers! Why I was first bridesmaid to Daphne Baird when she married a Cuyler. You can't possibly be—?"

But Daphne, with eager face and voice, broke in, "Oh, then you are Antoinette, my grand-aunt's northern school chum, and handsomest

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bridesmaid? I know you now! Grand-aunt loved you so she had a little miniature of you in a locket, and your hair was braided in broad basket-braids, quite wonderful and all your own!"

Belden smiled, a bit maliciously, for he knew well his aunt's white water waves rested through alternate days on a blue velvet-covered head block. But Mrs. Dunham took no heed of him, only asked in bewildered tones, "And you, my dear, you are?"

"I am Daphne Cuyler Keith, born in Savannah," she made smiling answer. Then Mrs. Dunham, with a touch of real excitement, laid her hand on Daphne's, exclaiming, "My chum, Daphne Baird's grand-niece! Oh, my dear—my dear! Let me embrace you!"

Suddenly a memory had come to Belden. The picture of his mother was painted in a gown of that very peach blossom pink Daphne had spoken of. He saw his excuse—and in rising from the table, said, "Aunt Dunham, we must coax Mrs. Keith to come to luncheon some day soon, to see if mother's painted gown is not of the true peach blossom tint."

And Aunt Dunham saved herself a very bad quarter of an hour by the hearty approval of the suggestion, for her nephew had been well aware of that chill first greeting of his guest.

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As they rolled impressively homeward, Daphne turned her eyes on Belden, saying, "You have given me a delightful afternoon, yet I was ungrateful enough to be vexed with the Doctor, because he made the engagement for me without my knowledge or consent."

"Yes, it was a bit autocratic, but I could not quarrel with my good luck. I invited him, but he declined. Said the drive would interfere with his afternoon office hours, or something."

Daphne smiled a little slow smile, "No," she said, "his afternoon office hours are not so long as that, but he may be preparing some contribution to medical literature. It took me a long time to realize how completely Dr. Keith was absorbed in his own life. For a long time I hoped to prevail on him to take some slight interest in social life, but he can't be detached even temporarily from the scientific interests that enter into his very nature. It is a bit hard on a wife socially inclined, yet there is nothing so nobly becoming to a man as work,"—she ended loyally.

Even as she spoke they came whirling about a curve in the park driveway straight in the face of a doctor's buggy, and in it, sitting well back, with the reins loosely held in one hand, sat Dr. Keith with laughter on his face, while Olive

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Marr sat at his side talking fourteen to the dozen, and gesticulating as was her manner.

As Belden saluted with his whip a shrill "Oh!" escaped Olive's lips—but Daphne with haughty head held high, stared straight ahead.

"I—I said we would drive over on Long Island," murmured Belden.

"So I perceive," she answered dryly and spoke no more.

She saw but one thing—her husband's face. She heard but one thing—her husband's voice, saying with a touch of sharpness, "I have no time to drive about with women—too many calls to make." Yet here he was full of gaiety, and laughter, loitering through the Park with Olive Marr at his side. Yes, he had been told the coaching party was for the Long Island trip—hence this unexpected meeting with the slave to science, and his young ward, for whose sake he could find time for driving in spite of his crowding professional calls.

Thinking of the petty treachery a cold contempt came upon her face. On arriving at the house she murmured a few conventional words of courteous leave taking. As Belden stood at her side waiting for the opening of the door, he looked down with tormented eyes and breathed, "Your pleasure is dead—the day has been killed."

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A little fantastically she answered, "Then I may expect a train of mourning days to follow it. Poor dead day! It would have been better not to have known it at all."

And Belden, with a sort of choke in his voice, exclaimed, "Don't! Don't!"—then lifted his hat, and saw her pass into the hallway.

As he drove away rage, swift, blinding, as a black squall came down upon him. When he had first returned and found Daphne's beauty as he had predicted it, fully perfected and flawless, in her moving presence he had somewhat lost his head and more than once had betrayed too plainly the passion that possessed him. Yet it had always come to this: He had been reduced to humiliating silence by her cold, surprised disdain, or wounded to the soul by her blank indifference. Then diplomacy came to his assistance, he changed his tactics. Seeing the deadly monotony of her life he determined one day to remedy it if possible. He had seen her graciously ignore the neglect of her husband, and with a bound of the heart concluded she was utterly indifferent toward him, and here to-day, at the very moment he was delighting in her pleasure, the pleasure he had found for her, she had given proof that she still loved her husband well enough to let him spoil all enjoyment of life for her, and a black mad passion of jeal-

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ousy rose up in him. A frenzy of longing enraged him so, that had he been alone, in his fury he might have dashed his head against the wall, after the manner of an enraged captive bull who sights his herd!

Yet at no moment of his rage and pain did there for one instant enter his mind the thought of abandoning the pursuit—his last love-chase. He was not riding for a fall, but straightway for life or death, to win or lose! So long as Daphne was beautiful and he was alive he would strive to gain her; and the horses' delicate mouths felt his light hands suddenly grow heavy. Daphne was in her simple home dinner dress when Olive rushed up-stairs to her, all effusive frankness. Beginning at once with the dreadful disappointment she had felt when cousin Daphne had gone away in the seat of honor, by the driver's side on that too heavenly coach! And how dear cousin Philip had been so sorry for her—though he did make fun of her, too—and she must not blame cousin Philip, as he was not the least in fault! She had herself asked, and Philip must be forgiven because—

Daphne's even, colorless voice here halted her, saying, "Olive, even your position in this house, as a member of the family, will not excuse your presumption in attempting to act as mediator between my husband and myself. It



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is very sweet and noble of you to try and save your somewhat distant and vaguely related 'cousin Philip' from the consequences of some error known only to yourselves—quite good and noble, yet a trifle impertinent!"

Olive gasped, but once more broke out excusingly, "Really, you know Daphne, I—had quite forgotten what cousin Philip said to you about not having time to take you out, or I wouldn't have—"

"Pardon me, but I think you have read enough French to recall that 'she who excuses, accuses herself,' and Daphne held the door of her room, for Olive's exit.

The latter stood in the hall looking at the closed door a moment, then sighed, and said, "Well, well! She is proud! If I had been in her place, I'd have boxed the other girl's ears, and pulled her hair too! I know I should!"

Dr. Keith had attempted a half-laughing, half-confused explanation, saying he had received a wholly unexpected call, a hurried matter and—"

"A—ah!" tranquilly agreed Daphne, "I saw you were much hurried"—and somehow the explanation got no further.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BELDEN RETURNS.

There are few things more provoking under certain circumstances than imperturbable good temper if it is displayed by a person with whom one has the right to be annoyed, and the somewhat extravagant good spirits shown by the doctor at the next morning's breakfast created a sense of revolt in Daphne against such a flaunted indifference as to what pain or doubt or grief might be in her heart or brain.

In reality Philip Keith was simply following his usual custom of thrusting aside any small fret or annoyance that threatened his comfort. The breakfast, well chosen by Daphne, well cooked by Clutterbuck, well served by Mattie, was not to be neglected because of his stupid faux pas of yesterday. To ignore the matter was his way; to hide her sick heart and wounded pride behind gentle dignity and sweet, cold words was his wife's way, and with the piercing old eyes of the Professor, and the curious, prying eyes of Olive, ever watchful upon them, there was small chance of concealments being cast aside in favor of mutual understandings.

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It was small Daphne-May's innocent chatter that lightened the growing constraint at the table. She had been holding something in a tight, clenched, little fist, which she finally opened, to reveal a damp pink feather, evidently from "Scissors'" rose-tinted breast.

"What does that say great-dad?" she demanded with authoritative manner and dancing eyes.

The Professor looked at it through his glasses. "Well," answered he grimly, "to me it says two things. It says a moulting bird, and a girl with a brush and dustpan."

"Oh!" sighed Daphne-May, "don't it say 'trufe'?"

"Look here," snapped the old man, "You taught me that a big ostrich feather said truth—that's not an ostrich feather!"

"N-no," admitted the disappointed child. "But couldn't it mean a little 'trufe,' great-dad? A little pink 'trufe'?"

Dr. Keith burst into a laugh, and quick to distinguish between being laughed with or laughed at, Daphne-May's lips began to quiver distressfully, and the Professor roared, "Look here, you, Dr. Philip Keith, what the deuce are you laughing at? The child's thought is a good one, an original thought! You are pretty well acquainted with the thing you call a 'white lie' "

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(all eyes but his own suddenly sought the table.) You accept both the thing and the term 'white lie,' then why not 'pink-truth'? A small matter—a truth colored slightly by partisanship or favor? Keep the feather child, and by and by, dear, we will go to the library and put it under the glass, and maybe it will say 'truth' after all."

The little girl sighed with pleasure, but the elder Daphne turned suddenly radiant eyes on the old man, and to himself he ejaculated. "Eh—eh? Now I wonder just what that means?"

In the past Daphne's people had been leaders and ornaments of the best social life in the old Southern city, but fortunes had shrunk, and death had thinned the family ranks. Unable longer to keep house and dispense an extravagant and beautiful hospitality, they felt they could not endure obscurity in the city where they had been among those who rule, so they had chosen exile, and had come north to pine miserably in private hotels or fashionable boarding houses, where the people seemed bright and hard and sharp, and hid all kindly feelings, all tender sentiment as if they were secret sins. People who measured everything by the dollar mark; who held a gift solely at its intrinsic value, and gauged hospitality by its cost.

By birth, beauty and training, Daphne was

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fitted for social prominence, and in her young girlhood her ambition had been high. She possessed to a wonderful degree that precious quality which is either born in us, or we go without all our days—tact. Tact, without which a highly placed society woman often goes stumbling, and stepping on the toes of the gouty, unintentionally rubbing the wrong way the fur of the mighty, her faux pas many and flagrant. Daphne had too, all the southern woman's gracious cordiality of manner, that, with her originality of invention, quick judgment and nice perception would have made her an ideal social leader, and her ambition had turned society-ward—until suddenly every past hope, fear and plan, was submerged by her swift young love for Philip Keith. She had been shaken by a very passion of generous surrender, giving, giving with splendid generosity to the husband of her choice; giving body and soul, mind and heart, and so stood before him beggared, of everything save his love! But that was enough, and it would be hers forever—had he not sworn it at God's altar?

So a softer, tenderer passion than social ambition had held sway so long as Philip was the lover-husband, but when he began to live his own life, leaving her to her own devices, just at first her revived social ambitions were gratified

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to a limited degree, as she played hostess with charm to such friends as her husband's circle held; but she looked higher, she saw opportunities, and she could swiftly have profited by them, had she had her husband's support. With exquisite finesse she strove to draw him into the social life she aspired to, and when she realized that even his love for her could not detach him, however briefly, from his absorption in his own affairs, she was abashed, as well as deeply pained. And the knowledge of her defeat became a daily irritant. Thereafter she strove to hide her aspirations, but the monotony of her life was far beyond anything she had ever imagined.

She recalled with passionate longing that first precious year of married life, when Philip had made her his constant companion, his trusted confidant. Recalled that time when he had set his finite will against that of the Almighty's, only to fail miserably in the loss of the patient, that doomed, he had yet striven to save. When overcome by mental strain and cruel disappointment, with his face hidden in her breast great sobs had shaken him, in calming, sympathetic silence she had held him close, till self-control came back to him. Recalled those Sunday night "music feasts," as he had named them, when he would laughingly pin a program of his

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own selecting, to the music-rack, then stretch himself in a chaise longue and command her to play it straight through, assuring her that any encore number should be specially rewarded. Dear nights!—yet Cleopatra's dreamy midnight floatings on the mighty Nile seemed no further off than they.

Sometimes she cried aloud, "Why? Why must everything change so cruelly? Are all men selfish like Philip? He sought me out of all the women that he knew, and wooed and courted me with whirlwind intensity and passion. He wanted me, me only, of all the world. And I gave myself utterly, completely, withholding nothing. He wanted children—said of all God's good gifts to man, children were the most desirable. And I, by daring madness as well as death, gave them to him; children beautiful in body, mind and soul. And now, wanting nothing more, he holds me as a sort of combination housekeeper, head nurse, and day governess! Ah, what folly, trickery and treachery married men invite into their lives when they forget that a wife and a mother may still be a woman!"

Again: Why had they not a home to themselves? She might have held her husband longer, had there not been always the alien presence of the old Professor, or of Olive Marr to check affectionate impulse or full free expla-

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nation. Newly wedded people should live alone. Shocks will be felt, tears will be shed, but love will kiss them all away. They will find the weak spots in each other's armor, and if there is no one by to lift eyes and hands to heaven in horror of such unforgivable discovery, the two will in loving comprehension, try to avoid pressing each other upon the other's weak spots. Oh, blessed solitude a deux! where there is no one to coddle the bride's grief, or egg on the groom's anger, or suggest reprisals to both! Solitude a deux! where the young pair acquire the mightiest virtue, after fidelity itself, known to married life—fair toleration!

That Olive Marr consciously or unconsciously loved her husband, Daphne Keith had known from the moment Olive had been brought into her home. Daphne was a clean minded woman, and very proud, and had entertained no evil suspicions, but the girl's jealous, watchful guard, her curious, prying eyes, her extravagantly endearing familiarities with Philip were irritating to the extreme.

Then, too, the Professor, with a very old man's unreasoning dread of sudden poverty coming upon him and his, was continually checking and halting the household plans, anxiously prying into even her personal expenditures. Incapable of vulgar wrangling or of



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making special complaint of what was open to the observation of all, and seen plainly enough by everyone but the doctor, Daphne had at last ceased to struggle. She planned no more plans to win her husband's attention; dreamed no more dreams of Olive's possible marriage and departure. Mechanically she directed her house, spent all the time she could upon the little ones, and after that drifted—dully, stupidly, drifted.

Then one evening old Page had said to Dr. Keith, "A gentleman, sir, who missed you at the office has followed you over to the house. He seems to have a bad hand, sir. I showed him in the library—Oh, his name is Mr. Belden."

And when the felon had been treated, and the doctor had brought him to renew his acquaintance with the Professor and Daphne, Belden, with thundering heart had read the proud weariness on that lovely face with wild triumph. He thought, "The way seems clear—the game is half played—the prize is well within my reach!"

With wonderful skill he had successfully maneuvered for the position of the family friend. When the malignant felon had followed the slight hurt on board the yacht, he felt that Fate itself was working for him, in thus leading him so naturally to Dr. Keith. He had purposely missed the office hours, just as he had purposely

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made his call on foot, to avoid any hint of ostentation. Particularly anxious to win a welcome from old Professor Keith, whose ill-will might well prove a stumbling block in the path he meant to follow, he had adroitly turned their conversation to some of the triumphs of recent excavation, scientifically directed in ancient lands that were supposed to have yielded up all their treasures long ago. He spoke modestly of some rather rare papyri he had brought back from Egypt, and seeing the greedy light in the old scholar's eyes, Belden offered to place them, and a few venerable old parchments in the Professor's hands for examination and judgment.

And the old man was most agreeably surprised and pleasantly impressed, when the "refined sensualist," as he remembered to have called him, had expressed a growing envy of those devoted students of the language of the mighty past, who searching back through stupendous ages to learn the secret of the lives of millions, must find to-day's interests trivial indeed.

Much flattered, and most eager to obtain sight of the promised loans, the Professor assured Belden that they would be kept in perfect security in his safe—a poor old antique itself, that was nearly as fireproof as a heavy Saratoga trunk, but great was his faith in the old iron box

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—and carefully would the precious papyri be ensconced therein, once it came into his eager hands.

Olive Marr, Belden had disliked at sight, esteeming her as pretty, clever, rather underbred, and if not tricky, it was, he thought, because circumstances had not called forth that dominant quality. Still he was lavish with flowers, bonbons, music and books, and Olive, who had a keenly alert eye for the main chance, ate with zest many philopenas with him, in which game he always lost, but promptly settled his accounts by means of dainty trinkets or ornaments. So, by a little kow-towing, he found himself free to come and go in the old house at will.

Daphne's attitude of mind was, that once married all chances and changes of life were over, and just at first that view filled Belden with a secret, cruel amusement, for where in all his crowded past, had he ever known a handsome woman who believed the chances and changes of life ended by her marriage vow.

He had returned but little changed, a trifle heavier, a few glittering white threads showing at his temples, while as of old the small moustache was aggressively dyed and waxed. His manner, stately, gravely sympathetic, was touched at times by an almost womanly tenderness. Once at his entrance Daphne had given a

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small chill hand, and had dumbly raised such miserable proud eyes, that without a word of any kind he had turned a chair away from the light, placed her in it, and seating himself at the piano, had played as he had not done for years, with power, charm, precision and delicacy of touch; played until his watchful eye saw tears slipping from beneath the lashes that lay black against her white cheeks; played until they ceased, and the lovely face was calm. Then rose and bowed himself out of the room and house without having spoken one word.

But once outside, he piled the curses of many nations upon the man who possessed and neglected her. Who forced upon her the continual presence of a girl jealously in love with himself. Suddenly he stopped stock still, his hands clenched, the vein at his forehead throbbing hard.

"Can that be it, I wonder?" he asked himself. "Then he doesn't fear his wife! Because she is dumb, he thinks she is also blind. But he does fear that watchful spitfire, Olive Marr. By God, Dr. Keith, you are a bold man to attempt to use me! Then this explains why you throw me constantly into the company of my beloved lady. I am to be your lightning rod and draw the suspicions of the Marr upon myself, and away from you—and whom?"

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His eyes narrowed, a slow contemptuous smile came to his smooth red lips. "I wonder how many days will pass before I can name and place the creature for whom you slight and probably dishonor your chaste and lovely wife? I—I wonder how many days will pass before, through the Marr's own hand, I play you tit-for-tat. Doubtless you are a clever doctor, Mr. Keith, but in this game of love, lawful or unlawful, you are lacking in finesse; you are a trifle reckless in attempting to make a dummy of a man, who was past-master at the game when you were but a boy." And again he heaped with curses of many nations the soul of the man, who had in love accepted all and given nothing! Who had wearied of the beauty and purity and love of Daphne—one of God's most fair.

And while he cursed furiously the suspected disloyalty of the doctor, recalling with real suffering the picture of those tears escaping from the closed eyes of the neglected wife, he never realized what a case his was, of Satan reproving sin. He forgot the infamy of his own fixed plan for the attainment of this married woman; forgot the baseness of his intention to profit by the discrediting of the husband in the wife's eyes. A very Sir Galahad in his resentment of any wrong done to Daphne by another, he yet had but one object in life, to win her away from rec-

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titude and honor, to catch her wandering feet in the meshes of the net he patiently wove for them.

In two weeks Mr. Belden had found in Dr. Keith the protégé, and tame house cat as well, of a woman high in his own social world—no other than the eccentric and ever amative Mrs. Wesley Allingham—pleasingly known to her own set as the “baby-farmer,” because of her weakness for the society of young “taddies” of boys not yet acquainted with the fearful joys of the razor, and just growing familiar with the big, big D——s.

She must have been quite fifteen years older than the doctor, when she dismissed her “kindergarten,” in favor of her, “Too splendid, big, strong doctor! With the just divine hand!”

For Mrs. Allingham was nothing, if not a gusher. She was the recognized comedienne of her set. She had not been born to the purple. Old Wesley Allingham, widower, had, according to society, “picked her up” somewhere, and married her. Society had followed his sons’ example, and refused to recognize her. The rich old man summoned his sons. “Here,” he said, “is my wife, and here is my will. Accept the first and you share alike in the second.” Silence followed. Then old Wesley rapped out, “Refuse to accept my wife with decent courtesy,

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and you will never have a chance to break my will, for I'll give away in life every damn cent I own!"

Another silence. Then the sons crossed the room and offered fishy cold hands to the blously buxom Mrs. Allingham, and extended invitations to dinners in weak, far-off voices. Thereafter society had followed the lead of the sons and the sons' wives. Soon her eccentricities became precious to the bored, but when she began to indulge in stiff flirtations with lads of tender years, society hesitated again. It was excruciatingly funny, of course, but really at her age, you know—well, ought they or ought they not?

Then when it became known that old Wesley Allingham, rolled like a mummy in many rugs, had been seen driving in the Park, while his wife beside him ogled tenderly the cane-sucking lad sitting with his back to the horses—why that settled it. If her husband approved of the "kinder-garden," no one else could object.

So she boldly begged dinner invitations for her boyish cavaliers. Young Jimmie Waterton, "who is wild as a hawk, my dear, and so much needs a woman's guiding hand," or Tom Montague, a young cub, who walked, drove, and slept with a cigarette in his mouth, and was known at his club as "My Lady Nicotine," in

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consequence; Mrs. Allingham called him, "A perfect seraph, and hoped to keep between him and the world's wickedness as long as possible. His was such a beautiful soul."

Then the old husband of this enamelled, stout lady, with the brass-yellow locks, died, leaving her wealthy, free and securely established in her position socially. And she in a very fountain of black, had vowed that she had been only kept alive through the first awful days of loss and shock, by the utter devotion of the most gifted of doctors, with the exquisitely mesmeric eyes, and the most delicious touch! And she insisted, later on, that Blanche Martin have in that wonderful Dr. Keith. And she in turn raved over his stalwart strength, that was so perfectly balanced by gentleness of touch, and declared that she no longer dreaded facial neuralgia so delightful was the manipulation of his magnetic hands.

Mrs. Allingham's silly letters and extravagant gifts were at first smiled upon, because she had considerable influence in the fashionable world, and rich and prominent patients were preferable to middle class and poorer ones. But the silly amative old woman, suddenly weary of her child-stealing love practices, had become seriously enamored of Dr. Philip Keith, who made the mistake of underestimating the cleverness



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of the woman, and because she talked like a fool, regarded her as one.

Yet this was the same Eliza Brown from Nowhere, who had sufficient knowledge of humanity masculine, to lead shrewd old Wesley Allingham into matrimony, and to keep him loyal to her interests to the end. And Dr. Keith, meaning only to use her folly for his own advancement, lo, he found himself entangled, and deep in intrigue that was hard to hide, because of the elderly Rosamond's infatuation, who would have rejoiced had the whole world seen him stealing to her bower.

More and more she demanded his attendance upon her at public places, better and better to society he became known as "Mrs. Allingham's grown-up," while her extravagant gifts to the doctor, her countless visits to his office, and the amazing number of "sick-calls" she sent to the house for him; when at the same time her name was appearing steadily in the papers as entertaining this or that personage in her opera-box, or as dining a vast number of guests, and taking them afterwards to Mrs. X's private theatricals given for charity. These things were drawing upon the doctor the jealous watch of Olive, and as Belden rightly guessed, he feared her alertness, her jealousy and her sharp tongue.

"There is no proud reticence about her—the

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explosive little imp!!" the doctor half laughed, half scowled. "She will fly off the handle if she scents mischief. Go up in the air, and have the Professor on my back, and Daphne all on edge. My wife has the pride of all the angels in Heaven, but even she might not stand for the Allingham. Confound the woman, she takes chances of discovery that makes my blood at times turn cold. And I wish she wouldn't be so recklessly sure of that confidential maid of hers, Martha Hawley. She is miserly, and a miser can always be bought. I don't like, and I don't trust her. Mrs. Allingham turns her most secret thoughts inside out before her, just as she does all her physical secrets and defects. I wish I knew the fate of those two or three fool letters I wrote her. It would be exactly like her to be hiding them away some place, gathered up with ribbons and sandal wood, and all ready to spring up like a jumping jack, and raise the devil."

One evening when Mrs. Allingham's "urgent call" for the doctor had been received just at the close of dinner, he had noted the quick fall of Daphne's eyes, and the hot color in Olive's expressive face, and suddenly the idea of using Belden as his shield came to him. He chuckled delightedly as he obeyed the "sick-call," saying to himself, "Yes, I'll encourage him to spend as

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much time as possible with Daphne. He is an entertaining chap enough, and Olive will keep a suspicious watch on him for my benefit. He will notice nothing, and I can attend to my 'sick-calls' in peace."

Thus moved by the impulse known to disloyal husbands from time immemorial, he promised himself to provide Daphne with a pretty little turnout of her own. Thus with conscience soothed, he was continuing on his way, when another thought came to him, that he might be able to bribe Martha Hawley, the maid, to secure and deliver to him those idiotic letters of his writing to Mrs. Allingham. One he knew to be an all-revealing, drivelling effort, thrown together after a public banquet, when he found it impossible to obey her behest to come to her immediately. He was not his cool, level-headed self, and he was sure from Mrs. Allingham's artless rapture over its contents that it was probably the "limit" in folly.

Truth to tell, Dr. Keith was a trifle "near" where money was concerned and he felt that perhaps Martha's terms would probably be steep, and it seemed an awful waste of good money. After all there was no one on earth who took any interest in the thing beyond himself and Mrs. Allingham, and—well, he'd wait a bit.

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He did, and never imagined how badly he blundered—not even when one day soon after, in making his calls, he happened to see Martha and Anton (Belden's man) coming out of the east side of Madison Square Park, so deeply interested in their conversation that neither of them noticed him, though he laughingly leaned far out to look after them.

"Ah—ah!" he chuckled, "I said she was after the money. Anton is a very warm man after all these years with Belden—whose hands fairly drip with money. She will lure little birds down from the trees easier than Anton away from his master." And he gave no further heed to the matter.

Until—until one evening, when the family were seated at table in the dining room. Young "Mr. Keith" was not yet welcomed at dinner, and Daphne-May was watching intently her great-dad's long fingers skillfully shelling the walnuts his soul loved when dipped in wine, and she patiently waited for that moment to come, when a particularly fine and perfect half-kernel, after deep dipping in the wine should come to her ready little mouth.

Mrs. Keith was wearing a pretty gown of Dresden silk, a pale cream ground, powdered with tiny rosebuds, and tinier forget-me-nots, and the child, withdrawing her eyes from one

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of the treasures of the china cabinet, exclaimed, "My mama looks just like the pretty teapot, that's all over little flowers."

A laugh followed, and the doctor, looking his wife over with a leisurely glance, added, "You do look quite a dainty Dresden figure, Daphne. We will have to give you a pedestal in the drawing room."

So rare a thing had a compliment from her husband become, that Daphne's eyes looked fairly startled. She was smilingly declining the proffered pedestal, when Page entered and quietly handed her a letter, leaving a couple by the doctor's hand and then retired.

With her eyes on the child's lips eagerly opening for the approaching morsel, she carelessly broke the seal of her letter and read.

Suddenly one hand clutched the edge of the table with desperate grip. Then, as she read on, the color rose each side of her proud throat, sweeping over cheeks to temple and brow, right to the wavy masses of her hair—a dull, dark painful red, that seemed to burn where it touched. A heavy shudder shook her from head to foot.

The ever observant Olive saw, and with a sort of gasp put back a chair, as if to go to her. Daphne heard the sound. Her head went

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up, and in a quick, strange voice she ordered: "Take the child away! And Mattie, you need not return!"

Then she rose in her place, the color dropping in her face, leaving it ghastly. Her beautiful calm brows drew together in a frown, her nostrils quivered with rage, and the veins swelled in her throat, until with a click the clasp of the strand of pearls she wore sprang open, the necklace slipping unnoticed down inside her bodice. Then clinging with one hand to the back of her chair, she turned blazing eyes upon the old man, and spoke in short, fierce sentences.

"Professor Keith—when I entered this house—you welcomed me as your granddaughter. Since the death—last year of my uncle Cuyler—I am without a living male relative. Therefore I appeal to you, sir—and I ask if I am exposed to infamous insult—will you, demand for me—such poor, reparation—as comes from open apology?"

With eyebrows racing up and down above his fierce old eyes, Professor Keith sat gazing at her. There was a brief silence, then with a stiff little bow, and a gesture of his hand toward Philip, he answered, "After my grandson, I am at your command."

"Then act!" she said swiftly, and with con-

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temptuous finger and thumb, extended to him the letter.

As the old man drew down his glasses from his forehead, and read, his lips thinned, his face hardened. He slowly lifted his great height to the full, and seemed to tower giant-like for a moment, as he coldly, slowly said: "Dr. Keith, my granddaughter, through me, demands a full apology from you, for this most damnable insult!"

He held out the letter and Philip recognized it instantly. A hot rage seized him, and he exclaimed violently, "What scoundrel sent that letter to this house?"

"That you must discover, sir," answered the old man. "Unfortunately we know too well the 'scoundrel' who wrote it!"

The doctor sat sullen and silent. "Your apology, sir," prompted the Professor. Still silence. "Will you force me, sir, to remind you that you are in my house? Apologize, I say, and at once, sir!"

The doctor, with the gray look of the heavily tanned man who pales, rose and resting his hands heavily on the table, made the apology demanded, and added that the odium of the letter might be lessened in his opinion, by the fact that it was written when he was well under the influence of wine.



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As he turned to leave the room, Olive cried out: "Oh, Cousin Philip—dear Cousin Philip, what have you done?"

And he answered with a forced laugh, "Done? Why I've done what thousands of others have done before me—made a damn fool of myself!"

As he slammed the front door, he heard ring through the house, a long, half-wailing, half-laughing cry of hysteria—Daphne had lost her self control at last.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CLASH.

"Shall faith be given to the faithless—loyalty for disloyalty?" Through three minds this one question was persistently ringing.

Belden, feeling no shame for the baseness of his act, in sending Daphne proof of what she had dimly suspected, of the infidelity of her husband, argued: "She is still so beautiful, has been so lovingly loyal, she must now shrink with horror from Dr. Keith's treachery. If I am patient I may catch her heart on the rebound. Like other women scorned, she may turn the nearest available man into a weapon of revenge. Well, even that I'll welcome! I'll write her such a love note as may suggest the idea of revenging herself upon her husband through me—for where she is concerned, I know no pride, no shame, no right, no wrong! I only want her!—long and thirst for her! Even as that gentleman in hell longed for water!"

And his mind rang with the question, "Will she continue to give faith for unfaith—loyalty for disloyalty? God! I hope not!" Yes, he passionately hoped not, with quickened breath,

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and a heart that of late, under any excitement, labored like an engine on a heavy up-grade.

The Professor, taking heed of the regal beauty, whose sad, proud mouth and violet shadowed eyes had taken on a touch of brooding tragedy of late and noting the mistaken attitude of quite comfortable indifference assumed by the doctor—a humiliation in itself, the old man felt—asked himself anxiously, “Will she—can she go on giving faith for unfaith—loyalty for disloyalty? When I warn Philip that he is taking the wrong way, he only answers, ‘She has her children.’ But can a woman of Daphne’s brains and beauty sink utterly into being a child’s nurse? Ah, ‘whom the gods destroy, first they make mad!’ My grandson, Philip, is a fool, if he is not mad!”

Daphne, delicate minded, and tender hearted—who, had her husband been carried off his feet by youth and beauty, or some rare winning charm hard to resist, would have made some excuse for him, and possibly hidden her pain bravely and uncomplainingly—felt that in giving her a rival in the repellent person of that ancient and artificial frivol, Mrs. Allingham, he had added insult to desperate injury; he had made her ridiculous in the eyes of the tittering world. And as she moved listlessly through the duties of the day, the horror of her shame grew

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ever stronger. Oftener and oftener, she cried in her heart, "If I only had some relative left! I am so alone! so alone!"

The hard indifference of Philip to his wrong doing, his careless encouragement of Belden's visits, his hearty enjoyment of his dinners, his extravagant jesting and horse play with Olive, sometimes aroused in her a wild desire to burst forth in a torrent of bitter loathing, and then fly from the house. And so, drearily the question went ringing through her mind, too, "Can I go on giving faith to the faithless—loyalty for disloyalty?"

The atmosphere of the old Keith home had greatly changed. The household machinery ran perfectly, without jolt or jar as before, but an all pervading constraint was felt everywhere. Table conversation was artificiality itself, in spite of Olive Marr's exaggerated gaiety, and much talking was done through little Daphne-May. The doctor would remind the child that she must not let great-dad forget the "meeting of his old class to-morrow, at eight o'clock, eh?" And Daphne-May would say protectingly, "You won't forget, will you, great-dad?"

Mrs. Keith would say, "Has Daphne-May told papa about the book of designs left for him, to select the new gas fixtures from?"

It was uncomfortable as unnatural, and no

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one felt it more than poor, puzzled Daphne-May, who would at times gaze wistfully at the still, sad face of her adored, then humbly press her cheek to her mother's in uncomprehending, but most tender sympathy. And Daphne would catch the troubled face between her soft hands and cover it with kisses.

To-day, in some soft white woolen house gown, that fell in straight folds about her, a bunch of the yellow roses she loved, at her breast, she sat in the depths of a dim, old brocaded chair, so plunged in reverie, as not to heed the presence of the Daphne-worshipping cockatoo, "Scissors," who had clambered by the aid of beak and claw to her shoulder, and was nibbling the edge of her ear, and blissfully making that clicking noise that little Daphne-May called "kissing," and ever and anon raising her crest and lifting her feathers, while she closed her eyes and bowed her head, waiting for the absent-minded moving of her mistress's fingers through the feathers on the hot, powdery-dry head, that seems to be the affliction of all parrot families of the world, down to their most distant relatives. With her closed eyes and down bent head, the great pink-breasted bird was ludicrously blissful, and suddenly Olive Marr's voice said: "That cockatoo is approaching ecstasy."

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"As I should be, if I were receiving like treatment," remarked Belden, who stood in the doorway, hesitating before Daphne's pronounced pre-occupation. Daphne raised startled eyes, then glanced at her gown, as she tossed the unwilling "Scissors" to the floor. But Belden claimed all fault for calling so very early in the day.

Then Olive left them, on her way to the shops for "thripence worth of nothin,'" as old Clutterbuck termed it.

Belden led Daphne back to her chair, and then sank on to a low broad puff at her side.

His presence was so familiar there, she had long ceased to treat him as a stranger. To-day they were silent for a while, while Daphne listlessly stroked the feathers of the great bird now perched on the arm of her chair. Belden, who was not fond of "Scissors," because he believed all beak birds treacherous, took from a pocket a long lead pencil and held it in front of the cockatoo, who solemnly extended one claw and accepted the bit of wood, gravely inspecting it, first with one eye, then with the other, and finally holding it in her beak, she descended backward from the chair, and waddled over to the brass fender, where with crest erect, she laughed and "kissed," and bobbed and bowed, and with sharp clean cuts reduced the pencil to

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small chips, to her own satisfaction and that of the visitor, who preferred her room to her company.

Belden, watching Daphne's weary face, noted the shadows beneath her lovely eyes, and a spasm of anger contracted his dark features. "Life is growing too hard for her," he thought. Then speaking, lightly enough, he remarked, "I do not like that great bird's endearments for you—is she not treacherous?"

"N—no," answered Daphne, absently. "Not treacherous, revengeful, perhaps on provocation. She so detests Olive for throwing water at her that she might bite her if she found a chance. But the bird's memory for people long absent is quite wonderful, and her patient endurance of the children's rough handling is beyond all praise. No, I should not like to suspect our 'Scissors' of treachery."

Another silence followed, while he revelled in her beauty, from the waving silky glory of her hair and classic brow, down to the alluring curves of that sweet body, whose flowing lines passed softly from one unconscious pose into another of more moving beauty. To the very core of his heart he was thrillingly conscious of the touch of her trailing skirts across his foot.

Blasé, burnt-out, dead to the rest of the world, every fibre of his body thrilled into life

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at this woman's approach. These almost daily meetings and greetings were such rapture to him that with an intellectual sensuality he often asked himself if possession could increase his joy.

Again he spoke: "You seem pre-occupied—disturbed, Mrs. Keith. You have received annoying news, perhaps?"

"Annoying?" she repeated wearily. "Annoying? Yes, I have received hideous information by letter."

"Not anonymous, I hope?" he suggested innocently.

"No—not entirely. The letter was signed, but the despicable sender of it is anonymous."

Belden's eyes sought the floor; a dark red burned in his face a moment. Then he reached and raised a newspaper that had slipped from the sofa, and as he folded it his own name came uppermost.

"Stanley Belden, our modern Lucullus, repeats in New York the madly extravagant suppers he made Paris, Cairo and London familiar with. Makes the great Roman feasts look economical and provincial. Fruits of all seasons, from all quarters of the globe meet in baskets of silver and gold. Tropical pineapples circled with fruit from Oregon and California, cheek by jowl with apples from Australia, peaches

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from Africa, and glass grown nectarines and strawberries. Several prominent artistes appear and dance and sing after the close of the theatres. Decorations magnificent and original. Center of table turned into a lake, where night-blooming nymphia unfold before eyes of guests, etc."

Daphne's eyes had caught sight of the glaring head lines, and with an edge of scorn in her voice, she asked: "Why do you do that?"

"Why do I give the suppers? Well, certainly not for this!" contemptuously tossing the paper to the sofa. "Besides all this is gross exaggeration. My suppers have become famous because I command the services of the best chef Paris has produced in fifteen years; and I give them because—" his dark face took on a look of unutterable weariness. "Because I am fighting that most intolerable ennui—loneliness."

The black lashed, blue eyes filled with slow wonder. "You—you, who have so much to keep you occupied and amused?"

"You are pleased to mock me," he answered sharply, both pain and resentment in his voice. "At those gay suppers all profit—save the giver of the feast. The chair at my side is ever empty. Oh, believe me, Mrs. Keith, pain and I are well acquainted."

"Better that," she said bitterly, "than to be



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void of all feeling. I am coming to be like a stagnant pool. Water that moves is clear and clean and wholesome. But when it is motionless, it becomes first flat, then dead, then noxious, and finally a menace. But you—" she added with a quick change to lightness of manner, "You have but to beckon, and your chair will find an occupant."

"Never—until you fill it—oh, most beautiful!" he ventured quickly; then lifted quick, enquiring eyes, for someone was descending the stairs, one step at a time, and presently Daphne-May appeared. She paused to shake hands with Belden, and "Scissors," seizing the hem of the child's dress, began to clamber up to her arms.

"Why are you down stairs, dear?" asked Mrs. Keith.

"I'm goin' to find great-dad in the li'bry."

Daphne, with a shiver and a laugh, said low, "No one else in the house would risk disturbing him there."

"He is so fond of her?"

"Very!" she nodded. "How can he help loving the tender little soul?" Her baby heart holds pity enough for the whole suffering world." Then quickly she said, "What do you want great-dad for, dear?"

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"I'm agoin' to give him a lesson now," she gravely replied.

Belden strove not to laugh. "What kind of a lesson?" he demanded.

"I'm agoin' to show him how to dwaw a Gweek letter. He knows 'em all, o' course, to read 'em, but I can dwaw 'em with my pencil, and I'm goin' to show him now."

Tears of repressed laughter came to Daphne's eyes as she pictured to herself that lesson. Then Belden asked curiously, "Why does the child call him great-dad?"

"Daphne-May!" she called. "Come tell Mr. Belden why you say great-dad."

"'Cause he is great-dad," she answered surprisedly.

"Yes, I know, dear, but explain the relationship to Mr. Belden."

"May I have a little book for my ownself, mamma?"

"Yes, dear."

The child went trotting around securing books—three big ones, and one tiny copy of poems. She gravely and importantly arranged them in a row on the edge of the table. "Scissors," continually trying to clamber up her short skirts, Belden thrust out his foot between the bird and the child, to the great annoyance of the former.

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"There," proceeded Daphne-May, "Now this is how we go." She planted a finger on the little book—"That's me—this bigger one, that's papa—this next big one, is papa's papa. He would be my grand-dad, only he's out!" and she swept the book back to the floor, thus sharply indicating death. "Then you have to skip to this big-big book, and he's Professor—my papa's grand-dad, and," triumphantly, "my great-dad! Now, do you see—you say 'em."

Belden, letting one hand hang loosely at his side, with the other gravely pointed out the books. "This is you—this is papa's doctor—this one, we jump, was papa's papa—and this big fellow, is great-dad?"

"Oh, mamma!" cried the child, dancing with delight, "Mr. Belden learns lessons more quick than great-dad does!"

Belden's laugh broke into a half-stifled oath and a cry of pain. "Scissors," with the treachery of her race, had sidled to his chair, and spying the down-hanging hand had bitten deep the forefinger, close to the nail. The blood was flowing freely. Daphne had closed her hand tight about the finger, holding it up, and speaking very quietly, sent the little girl for Lena, to bring things up at once for a bad cut.

"I beg of you, don't mind," said Belden, "let

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me just wrap my handkerchief about it. Please don't trouble!"

"Mr. Belden," she insisted, "that is a nasty wound, and possibly a poisonous one. It must be cleansed and properly dressed. Can you not trust it to me for first treatment at least?"

"Trust? I'd trust my whole body and immortal soul to you! I only wished to spare you an unpleasant task."

And then Lena appeared with a small basin of water, a towel, and a basket containing all things needful for dressing a cut or burn.

"This is the nursery outfit," smiled Daphne, as she dealt generously with the antiseptic. "Gracious, how dreadfully you bleed! She must have bitten to the bone!"

"Mama, shall I put 'Scissors' in the cage until she's sorry?" asked Daphne-May.

"Yes, dear," answered her mother.

"Yes, indeed!" added Belden, as the child obeyed. "For that will be tantamount to life imprisonment, since the vixen will never be sorry."

Then for a few blissful moments he yielded up his hand to Daphne's manipulation. To save his immaculate cuff from possible spatters, she wound her handkerchief about it, tucking the loose edges inside, with accidental touches of the wrist, that sent shudders of delight along

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his nerves, while through her dear nearness, as she bent over him, he caught from hair and raiment those faint and precious odors that are love's most maddening lures, and knew his self-restraint was failing fast.

He was vaguely conscious that Lena had come and gone, removing the nursery outfit and taking small Daphne-May with her. His thick neck had reddened, as had his swarthy face, and across his brow he felt the throbbing of the accursed veins he hated.

To salute a woman's hand was but a gravely courteous custom with Stanley Belden, but now he silently sought Daphne's left, and turning it palm upward, pressed upon it, again and again, the long, tender, clinging kisses of reckless passion.

She sharply drew upon her hand, but he would not release it. He fancied the icy coldness was growing in her eyes, that he had seen so often there, and he would not lift his heavy lids to see. But as always, that darkening, distending vein, for some inexplicable reason, aroused Daphne's pity. She remembered it came upon his forehead the first time she had ever seen him, and now, without thought of consequences, on a kindly impulse, she laid her free hand across his brow, meaning to stroke away the congestion there.

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In an instant he was upon one knee before her, his great arms about her waist, his face hidden against her arm. Drawing heavy, sobbing breaths, he cried, "Daphne! Daphne! you know—you must—you shall know, how I love you? Whether for happiness in the future, or for eternal misery—I love you!"

She stiffened, and with fingers upon his shoulders pushed steadily from him. But with eyes still hidden he held up one entreating hand, and lightly touched her lips, pleading, "Don't—don't! curl contemptuous lips at me! Your scorn makes me shiver like a dog beneath the lash of its owner! Listen—oh, listen Fate meant you for me. You made your own choice, and you thought to choose wisely, but you were mistaken! And now God's fairest, how can I bear to see you flouted by the one who should worship you! See you—my empress—turned into an upper-servant! See you hiding slow heart-break in this hotbed of treachery, where a new and hideous dishonor may be put upon you any day! Can I bear it, and not cry out, come to me? All I have is yours, Daphne dear, I love you so!"

Too proud for unseemly struggle, she stood quite still, and speaking for the first time she said: "If you really loved me, Mr. Belden, you would counsel me to be brave, to be strong, to sacrifice myself to duty."

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Swiftly he cried: "You may find a saint to so counsel you, but by Heaven, no man that loves you! Oh, most beautiful! it is what we are that counts—not what we should be. Humanity cannot live in this world by standards set by angels.!"

"No wife should stumble," she answered wearily.

"No wife does stumble so long as love and faith hedge her about! Oh, my neglected! flouted! passed-by! Take your revenge! Let your unworthy husband taste the fruit of his deceit and disloyalty!"

Then across his hurrying tones, her voice, cold and even, cut, "I think you are quite mad. I shall not be able to receive you again, Mr. Belden."

With a cry he was on his feet. Passing his tongue across his dry lips, his hand across his suddenly wet forehead, "Not that!" he pleaded huskily. "Not that! Break your engagements with my aunt—that I have been living for! Try my endurance—punish me in any other way, but for God's sake, don't deny me the sight of you! Can't you understand, beloved woman, that for the rest of my life I must walk the world in your dear shadow?"

Suddenly she realized how endlessly long and dull and bitter were the days unbroken by his

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kindly, courteous, sympathetic presence, and she gravely answered, "We will forget the folly of to-day, and—remain, as we were a week ago."

"Thank you," he said, humbly. Then remindingly went on, "You had promised to go with me to-morrow to see the 'Russian Marriage' and to help select my offering to your art booth at the coming church fair."

His eager eyes searched her face that was already calmly unconscious, as was her voice, when she said, "Yes, I remember—and Mrs. Dunham promised us our tea. If neuralgia permits it, I shall keep the engagements."

With slow dark eyes, humid with gratitude and worship, Stanley Belden took stately leave of the slender white robed woman, who ever held him at arm's length; who was so sure of herself that she forgave his self-betrayal, his open speech, and trusted him again, treating him as a favored friend.

It was hideously humiliating to his manhood, and yet, good God, how he thanked her! And—and from the defeat of to-day may be plucked the triumph of to-morrow. He felt that revolt against destiny was steadily growing stronger in Daphne's heart. Opportunity would come in a reckless, flashing moment probably, and he must be ever alert and ready to grasp it. So, promising himself to be patient and ever watch-



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ful, he bowed himself from the room; just as Page opened the front door to Olive's ring.

She was evidently much excited, there were indignant drops in her brown eyes. Her cheeks were like wild roses. She held in her hand a copy of a gossipy, scandal-spreading publication, and her lips curled every time she looked at it.

As Belden drew back to let her pass, she stopped and imperatively demanded, in an unnecessarily loud voice, "Mr. Belden, do you know a Mrs. Allingham?"

"I know the Mrs. Allingham," he smilingly corrected.

"Is she rich?"

"Well, really, she never has confided to me her financial standing, Miss Marr, but her social position is absolutely secure."

"And—and her character, Mr. Belden?"

"Oh—er—well, that is an entirely different matter."

"Is she young—is she pretty?"

"Most certainly not!" he answered amusedly. "She is rather elderly, and by a great expense and much discomfort, she makes herself look like one of the proscribed race."

If he had intended to shame or mortify Olive by such a reference, he failed. She rushed on

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with snapping eyes. "Do you know the location of her opera-box?"

"It is about opposite mine."

"Were you at the opera night before last?"

"I was."

"And—and did you see—my Cousin Philip in—"

"I beg pardon," lifting insolent eyes. "Whom did you say?"

"My cousin—that is, Dr. Keith. Did you by chance see him in Mrs. Allingham's box that night?"

"I did—I often see him there, Miss Marr." And to himself he laughed, "Tit, Dr. Keith—tit for your tat."

While Olive cried, "Then this beastly thing speaks the truth! I would sooner have believed Cousin Philip guilty of arson or murder than of falsehood!"

"Olive!"—came from the library doorway, where the Professor loomed darkly.

"Olive, please!" almost in a whisper of amaze from Daphne, in the drawing room. With a low murmured "Pardon me," Belden passed out, and swiftly down the steps, saying to himself:

"She's a cad—yes, in spite of her sex, she's an utter little cad! What an infernal presumption! Anyone would suppose she was the in-

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jured wife! Ah, Dr. Keith, your lightning rod has failed. I'm afraid you will receive an electric shock from your Olive after all!" and laughed aloud. Glancing back he saw the doctor's man turning the horse away, and guessed the doctor had returned for luncheon.

"Olive!" the old Professor exclaimed, "I never saw anything more ill-bred than your catechising of Mr. Belden just now."

"I only wanted to know if this outrageous paper was telling the truth or not! Whether Cousin Philip was capable of deliberate deceit and double dealing!"

"And pray, how long have you been the authorized censor of my grandson's morals? Since when has it become derogatory for a gentleman to be seen at the opera?"

"And since when," she sharply retorted, "has it not been derogatory for a married man to pose publicly as the devoted cavalier of another woman than his wife? He should be taken to task with unqualified severity, and I—"

"You," interrupted Daphne, "You will please remember that I have at no time delegated my wifely authority to you."

"Your authority!" recklessly replied Olive. "So long as you are proudly sure of your own stainless purity, you will not stoop to give him a piece of your mind, about his sins of omission

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or commission! Catch you rebuking the doctor for his double dealing!"

At that moment a key turned in the lock, and Dr. Keith, tall, erect, quick-moving, was hanging his hat on an arm of the hat-rack, and on the instant Olive Marr was upon him. With flashing eyes and furious tones she figuratively proceeded to rend him; her accusations accompanied by an expletive redundancy overflowing and running to waste.

His face flushed, his eyes sparkled angrily. "Whom have we to thank for this sickening, petty tale-bearing?" Then looking at Daphne, he suddenly answered his own question. "That gilded idler, Belden, I suppose; who has nothing else to do but gabble like an old woman!"

"Pardon me, Philip," corrected Daphne, "your ward, Miss Marr, was the petty tale-bearer, not Mr. Belden—whom she sharply cross-examined here in the hall, securing some corroborative evidence against you in so doing."

"Pah!" petulantly exclaimed the doctor. "He stands for nothing, anyhow!"

Wrong, sir!" snapped the old Professor. "Mr. Belden stands for many things. Old name—old family—and, well, old money, too! If you think so poorly of him, I wonder you approve of him as your wife's friend, and give no thought to what seed he may be sowing in her mind."

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The doctor's real thought was how impossible would be any attempt to draw Daphne's mind away from duty and right doing, but unfortunately a little shrug and half smile accompanied the thought, and suggested to all present a contemptuous indifference.

Daphne felt the hot fire of resentment leaping high in her heart, but Olive rushed in again. "And you—Philip Keith—to stoop to such falsity! I tried so hard that night to keep you home! I had a new song that I had practiced most carefully for your amusement, and you could not stay. Oh, no! You were compelled to work—to complete a paper on—oh, on goose flesh, or hiccoughs, or something! A paper that all the world was holding its breath in waiting for! You needed such perfect quiet; you had to go to your office to write far into the night—arousing our sympathy! Do you suppose we enjoy being cheated, mocked, imposed upon? That we—"

"W—we?" stammered the doctor.

"WE?" thundered the Professor. "Are we in New York or Salt Lake? Is this a Mormon household of one husband and two wives?"

The hot blood rushed over Daphne's face—but, raising her eyes, she saw a listening black skirt and white apron at the head of the stairs, and said very low, "You are providing material

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for a fine symposium below stairs. Mattie is about announcing luncheon, and Lena is descending with boy Philip. Either speak lower, or go into the library."

Olive and Philip withdrew as suggested. The Professor called Daphne-May into the drawing room with him, and Lena—trying to look innocent of eavesdropping—led the short-legged young Mr. Keith to his mother, and retired below stairs.

Presently—when the old man and the babies had been seated at table, Daphne went back to the library and opened the door to remind them that luncheon was waiting, and found Olive Marr, her hat off, and repentant tears streaming, holding one of Philip's hands between hers, pleading with him, "To kiss and forgive!"

The doctor saw his wife first, and looking rather foolish, drew away from the girl saying, "Good Lord, Olive! Will you never be more than a child? Try not to be such a little terma-gent hereafter!"—and passed out of the room on way to table.

Olive, looking up, met the icy anger of Daphne's sapphire eyes, and exclaimed nervously: "It seemed so terrible that a man of his high character; of his professional standing should stoop to mean, vulgar trickery, for the sake of a hideous, unattractive old thing, too.

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I—I—both mama and I always looked up to him as to one superior to other men! I could not bear to see him stoop to the follies of others! You must understand, Cousin Daphne, that if I was a bit impetuous, I was actuated by a pure and sacred desire to protect him from himself."

"Pardon me, Olive, you were actuated by furious jealousy! There is a mighty chasm between our two estimates of your feeling for my husband! Your mask of childish, innocent familiarity has worn so thin that your woman's towering passion shows plainly through. I cannot wrangle, quarrel, or make scenes, but you must not think me incapable of resentment—a resentment that will be swift, strong and perhaps reckless! So I warn you now, if ever again you make such an open exhibition of your love for my husband, one of us will leave the house, on the instant!"

Then Daphne swept from the room, and back to the table, saying calmly, "Mattie, take a tray luncheon upstairs, please, Miss Marr is not feeling very well."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BELDEN'S PLOT.

"Never again will I speak a disparaging word anent the church fair or the charity bazaar," smiled Belden, as Anton held the blazing taper to his cigar. For knowing Mrs. Keith to have charge of the art booth, he had won permission to donate a picture to charity, and her promised assistance in its selecting.

His aunt had said to him, "I hope the lovely little Cuyler-Keith will drop in for tea. That young Italian harpist, who plays so divinely, will be here, and she adores the harp, I know."

And he had repeated Daphne's promise, of coming, if her neuralgia permitted, adding anxiously, "Her health is not the flawlessly perfect thing it was some months ago, aunt Dunham."

"You don't suppose any of this gossip about Dr. Keith and our 'child-stealer' could have touched her, do you? That would be infamously cruel."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Such things seem to have mysterious powers of dissemination. Like the downy seed of the dandelion,



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they travel far and wide on the currents of the air."

And now smoking his cigar in the den opening from the billiard room, while awaiting the hour of his appointment with his beloved, he was conscious of a heavy-headed drowsiness. The night before a quiet little game had been started in a retired room at the club, and somehow had unexpectedly developed into something stiffer, and at last a tremendous game, played by men with blazing eyes, looking out from pale set faces. A game whose limit, light at first, went steadily soaring upward until it passed out of sight—went wild on unlimited stakes.

The dawn was smiling rosily in the east as Belden entered his house. He had lost an enormous sum, but he had known a brief period of real excitement, and he paid the price willingly, only now he felt drowsy. As he recalled his losses, his face suddenly lighted with pleasure. "Unlucky at cards—lucky in love"—he muttered smilingly.

"Well, it's time for luck to come my way. Never in my life before have I found the attainment of a married beauty so desperately difficult. My two best weapons have broken short off in my hands—vanity and envy. Daphne has ever been calmly conscious of her beauty, there-

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fore it has been impossible to turn her head and win her through flattered vanity. Heretofore I have placed great faith in the seductive power of jewels. They are to the tempter of to-day what that wonderful apple was to Satan. Women, who are mercenary, covetous and vain, find in their exquisite beauty intrinsic value, and general becomingness of rare jewels is a temptation irresistible.

"But here, even they are useless. Here, it would be joy to crown that haughty little head with jewels; to see the cold fire of diamonds burning at throat and breast! Daphne alone, of all women I have ever seen, has the neck and shoulders of the fine grain and flawless whiteness of new ivory, that would enhance the lustrous beauty of pink pearls. They are, too, her favorite gems—but well, I am not likely to forget her amazed and cold disapproval on the occasion when I thought to offer her a remembrance of a certain day.

"Daphne respects all the conventions, as well as the virtues; as a woman of good breeding should. But there are times when my longing for her is almost unbearable; when I wish she was of a lower class of life, for I swear I'd be capable of some mad folly, some dime-novel idiocy, that would antagonize the law—for abduction is not popular, even in low life. But

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when the world holds for you but one woman, there's mighty little you'll not risk to win her, and—and—good God, how I have changed. I have reached the place where I know the value of a tender word. I have learned a new side of feminine nature.

"I realize I have never known love before. Heretofore I have sought only novelty; having known only passions swift, strong, brief—that have burned through the months to satiety. And I have been held cruel and faithless. Only a few have broken fair, and without scene-making.

"One was a Roman flower girl, Maddelina, who gladly sold her splendid dark beauty for some beads and earrings of rose coral. Another as considerate was my Lady A——, of London, who, moved by ennui and her love of emeralds, had been won to rule me royally for a time, and when I wearied of the game, with fierce pride she said, 'Adieu!'—and no word more.

"The little flaxen, sentimental Gretchen—I always shiver at the thought of her! She looked so childishly young as she lay dead by her own hand.

"It was Lota, the circus rider in Paris, who gave me a scar on my shoulder. A nasty knife thrust it was, too. And then, Irma, the Rus-

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sian colonel's wife, whose tongue was sharper than Lota's knife.

"By Jove, she it was who simply would not accept congé, until I finally bought my freedom with the rubies of her absolute idolatry—and even then so strong was her passion, that she saw the glowing jewels through burning tears. As for the last time, she served the amber colored caravan-tea I appreciated so thoroughly, she said dreamily: 'I am a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, my friend, give me your cup, and hear my prophecy.'

"Slowly she spoke: 'You have loved but one person in the world—yourself. You live for novelty and caprice. The history of your amours can be told in three words—desire, attainment, satiety. No woman is too high for you to aspire to, none too low for you to stoop to. You brush aside the bloom of innocence—you break the proud spirit of those who have trusted you. You woo with tender fury—you abandon with heartless coldness. You break hearts—you destroy characters—you pull down reputations. You think a handful of gold thrown after a betrayed woman, clears you of all obligation.

"'Now listen, my friend: Who breaks—pays! That is the law, and when the bill is presented, not one item will be forgotten—ah, believe me,

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not one! Through all the years a man weaves his dearest sin, his forbidden pleasures, into a thing for flagellation of his own shoulders! You have been infinitely cruel to women, and—are you listening?—through a woman shall you be punished! For you will love one woman with all your soul. Ah, yes! for no man goes to his grave without loving once. You will live only in the light of her eyes, and she will look upon you with sweet, cold indifference. Your living heart will lie in her two little hands, and for every tear you have caused a woman to shed, she will slowly wring a red drop from your heart. You will hunger, and starve, and agonize for the love of that one fair woman, and at the very moment of seeming attainment, she will slip from your arms forever.

“‘For I am a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, and am gifted to read the secrets in the book of fate. And all I ask of God or Devil is, that in the moment of your final loss, you think of me! For then only will you understand what this moment spells for me!’”

Then as he wandered through such memories, he gave a sudden start. “Daphne! Daphne!” he cried, “You here, and without hat or cloak?”

Worshipful as he had ever been of her beauty, never had he seen her like to this. Her black-lashed lids drooped somewhat languidly over

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the intense blueness of her eyes. She leaned both hands on the table beside him, and advanced half-pouting lips roguishly toward him. With a suffocating cry of rapture he leaned forward to meet her challenge—when the exquisite face changed; it was hideous with scars, cruel, unhealed! The lovely tints were gone, the skin was yellow, old, unhealthful!

He bounded to his feet crying—"What is it? Good God, what is it?"

Anton was at his side in an instant. Belden with heart laboring furiously, gasped, "Brandy—quick!"

Anton hesitatingly said: "Do you think it should be brandy, sir—you know what the doctor said?"

"I think you heard what I said!" and in a moment he was taking the forbidden peg of brandy.

"You had no sleep last night, sir, and napping sitting upright is apt to induce nightmare"—ventured Anton, as he presented Belden with hat and gloves.

"Right!" he answered, and descended to the sidewalk, and entered his brougham. Yet every time he recalled that agonized scarred face of his dream he shuddered.

That morning at luncheon Dr. Keith had passed an envelope to Daphne and another to

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Olive. Since her Uncle Cuyler had left by will a few thousand dollars to Daphne, she had been in receipt of a tiny income of her own; a thing of jokes and jests, and yet welcome to her lean little pocketbook. For though Philip's practice was now a valuable one, his wife's allowance remained stationary, and her sensitive pride kept her silent on the subject, save when the needs of the little ones were in question, then only she played the beggar.

To-day Dr. Keith said remindingly, "Last quarter-day I was in Philadelphia at the Medical Congress, and your affairs *mes enfants* were neglected, so to-day you have a full half year's settlement."

With a laughing apology, Daphne daintily drew up her skirt—she was already dressed for the street—and slipped her envelope into the small, strongly-clasped chamois under pocket, that careful women wear suspended from the waist, for the safety of rings or money they fear to trust to wrist bags or hand-carried pocket-books. Her envelope was decidedly thin, but Olive's was as decidedly bloated; and the doctor jested, "You'll be millionairesses yet, both of you, some day!"

"Gracious!" smiled Daphne, "what a very ugly word!"

"Abominable!" agreed the Professor.

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Then the doctor rose from the table, and laying a five dollar gold piece by young Mr. Keith's plate, said, "Now, don't swallow that, youngster, before it can reach your bank," and he stooped and kissed the boy.

"W-w-why Philip!" stammered Daphne.

"Well, what?" retorted the doctor. "The child is really too young to appreciate any birthday gift."

"Well, I'm d—blessed!" snapped Professor Keith—then laughed consumedly.

The quick pained color flew over Daphne's face, but she quietly explained, "This is not our man-child's birthday, Philip, but Daphne-May's."

"You'd better invest in an almanac, Cousin Philip," jibed Olive.

"Oh, well, there's only a week between the two dates, and let me tell you there are plenty of busy fathers who never recall their children's recurrent birthdays."

"Then let the youngsters bless God for their mothers! For nothing," continued the Professor, "seems to strengthen the feminine memory for such dates like child-bearing. Now, my granddaughter usually gets her Egyptian dates all wrong. She got the Pharoah of the Exodus—Rameses II.—all tangled up with Thutmose III., who long preceded him, and his favorite



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son Khamwese, who followed. But should she live to be a hundred, she will never mix the birth dates of any member of her family. But you catch me a male juggler of figures that you can say that of!"

Daphne-May took it as a delicious joke that papa had given her birthday to young Mr. Keith. The doctor, in turn, rather confusedly, suggested that Daphne-May might get for herself the little piano she had longed for. And with real embarrassment the child answered, Great-dad did give it me already, Papa."

Both pain and anger showed plainly in his face, for he was keenly mortified, and the child went to him, saying, "May I whisper, please?" and reaching on tip-toe, she asked, "May I I drive with you for my birfday, papa?"

A quiver passed over his face as he bent and kissed the little peacemaker. "Yes, dear, you may drive with me, but not to-day."

Daphne whispered in an aside, "Get a perambulator for her dollie, and she will be in a paradise."

He looked up gracefully into the splendid eyes, and had they been alone, he would have yielded to the impulse to take her in his arms and kiss her—and all things might have been so different for every soul within that room. But the presence of Olive, the ubiquitous, and

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the ever observant Professor, acted like a brake, hard down, upon any expression of conjugal tenderness.

A little later the doctor descended the stairs, scribbling in his note book, the size in inches of Daphne-May's doll—"Helen of Gweece"—who would have been named Eve, only Great-dad had said, he believed Helen was better looking than Eve, and he was certain she knew more. And now that her go-cart might be purchased without error, he wrote down the measurements. As Page opened the door to Belden's ring, "good-mornings" were exchanged. Then the doctor broke out, "Oh, I say, rumor's seven tongues were all busy this morning over last night's high-jinks. Was it really a game for unlimited stakes, Belden?"

"W—well," with eyes turning uneasily towards the drawing-room, "Things soared for a while."

"By Jove!" sighed the doctor, "I'd have enjoyed looking on."

"Oh," shrugged Belden. "You could have felt no interest without a stake in the game."

"Wrong, sir, there's just where my enjoyment would have come in. To see other chaps winning or losing like blazes—pushing hundreds about like nickels, and thousands like quarters, and myself beyond the danger line."

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A slow smile crept across Belden's smooth red lips. "Your ideas of enjoyment are peculiar." Then with a faint touch of contempt in his tone, he added: "You are perhaps wise to keep beyond the danger line. I'm afraid Dr. Keith you would not make a good loser."

"Perhaps not," answered Philip, a touch sharply. "When a man earns his money, he feels a very natural desire to keep it as long as he can."

"Ah, yes, I see," gave back Belden. "Y—yes, that explains—er—many things."

The doctor gave him a puzzled look, then exclaiming, "By Jove! I'm late," clapped on his hat and bolted, leaving his instrument case behind him.

As Belden entered the drawing-room, he met Mrs. Keith already hatted and gloved. "Ah," he said, "you possess that virtue of sovereigns—punctuality!" Then as his eyes rested on her lovely face, he winced at the memory of his dream, and gazed at her with such intensity, that she was startled into putting up an apprehensive hand to her cheek.

"What is it?" she asked. "Why do you look so strangely at me?"

"I humbly ask your pardon. I feel I have been guilty of an indiscretion."

He laughed lightly. "I sat bolt upright in

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my chair a bit ago, and—dreamed of you, Mistress Keith."

He had thought to make her laugh, instead she gazed intently at him. "Was it an unpleasant dream?" she asked.

He bantered, "My lovely lady, could any man born of woman, dream unpleasantly of you?"

"I think you could—I think you did?" She leaned closer, her eyes wide and brilliant; laid one hand on his arm, and asked, very low, "Did you by any chance see me with a disfigured face?"

He gave a startled cry, then—lied. "No," and again fiercely, "No!"

But she shook her head smilingly at him now. "Beauty is a fragile thing at best, and the destruction of mine was predicted long ago."

She absently drew her fingers down her brow and cheek, and with a shudder he noticed that they followed the direction of those dream scars.

"It is very odd. "I have not thought of the old forecast for ages till to-day. But this whole morning it has been ringing through my mind persistently—and you dreamed your ugly dream this morning? Do you believe in telepathy, Mr. Belden?"

"I'm afraid I must after this," he answered

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ruefully. "Yet I used to smile unbelievably at:

"Star to star vibrates light; may soul to soul  
Strike thro' a finer element of her own?  
So—from afar—touch as at once?"

"Ah," she smiled, "you know your Tennyson, which proves a long memory, for I'll wager you have not read him in many a year. But hear me quote more strictly to the point, 'Coming events cast their shadows before,' oft times."

"For God's sake, don't, Daphne! Don't jest so lightly on this subject! But what is this forecast you refer to? Tell me of it, please?"

He drew her to the sofa, and seating himself beside her continued, "We are keeping no one waiting—tell me, before we start out?"

"It is as simple as it is silly, this story. When I was a child I was rather unusually pretty—"

"How surprising!" he smiled with adoring eyes upon that perfect face.

She raised a silencing finger, and went on: "My colored mammy was a widow, and she became enamored of a yellow boy, young enough to be her son; and she was so tormented by jealousy and doubts of his sincerity, that one

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day, when she was taking me for my walk she broke the rule that forbid her taking me into any strange habitation, and slipped away to consult an old fortune teller.

"She led me into a tumble down cabin, where a frightful old negress sat huddled up, almost in the fire-place, stroking a snake that lay curled up in her lap. It was non-poisonous, but it frightened, as it was meant to. My mammy wiped off a stool and seated me near the door, then she flung herself into the story of her fears and hopes, and bargaining for a love philter.

"All this time the grizzled negress had kept her bleared old eyes on me. My mammy noticed it. 'She's deh puttiest white baby in dis yer city,' she boasted. 'An' won't she be deh lovely lady wen she's grow'd up!'

"The hag leered at me. 'Y-y-yes,' she chuckled, 'she's whiter dan deh moon, and prouder dan great Lucifer. But its dem dat walk wid heads in deh stars dat fall deh heaviest. Hold out yer han,' she ordered.

"I was used to blacks; I was not frightened. I held out my hand. She grunted, chuckled, nodded. 'Huh—huh! Life, love, beauty—all break short off!' She threw the snake about her head, and with malicious pleasure, mumbled on. 'Make de mos' of yer proud moon beauty—yer'll lose it in an instant, an' forever!

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Huh—huh' an' 'member, beauty-bright, shield deh right side of yer face wen it's at deh love-liest!' And she waved back and forth in a gust of spiteful laughter, clawing the right side of her face, down from eye-brow to chin.

"Wild with terror, my mammy, Rhoda, picked me up like a baby and ran for home, where with tears, she implored me to keep silence as to our visit; and assured me again and again, 'Dat I wasn't conjured, bekase I was a white chile, and no nigger fortune-teller could read deh future for white peoples.'

"I was silent, but mammy Rhoda ever after anointed the right side of my face with butter-milk in summer, and cold-cream in winter, and walked unfailingly on my right, ready to defend with her life the prettiness of her small charge. There, now you know all I know. Let us go to see the 'Russian Marriage.' "

"Mama! mama!" cried Daphne-May, "May us say good-bye?" And Belden glancing upward saw young Mr. Keith laboriously descending the stairs backwards, and principally on his elbows. The girl came flying down. Very prettily shaking hands with Mr. Belden, she swiftly called his attention to the tiny chain and wee turquoise heart about her slender throat.

"That's my mama's own heart, and she gived

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it to me, and I did buy sunflower seeds for 'Scissors,' and new tassels for Tummy's ears."

"But why?" puzzled Mr. Belden.

"'Cause it's my birthday, and I want 'em to 'joy it!" He bent and kissed her brow, thinking, "She is a generous little soul."

As small Mr. Keith appeared, much hunched up as to clothing, Daphne cried, "Here I am, man-child!" and held out her arms to him. Lifting him up she kissed him in his neck, till he choked with laughter.

Then Daphne-May, with arms tight about her mother, asked, "Are you sure you don't want the little blue heart to wear, mama?"

"No, sweet, you are my heart!" and she kissed the child tenderly. "Papa and Aunt Olive know mama may be a little late for dinner—but you won't mind, darling, I'm sure, and I know you will be very good—by-bye!"

As she passed through the hall, she gave a little gasp of pain, and pressed her hand to her temple. To Belden's inquiry, she answered, "What a tinge of neuralgia! Oh, I hope it's not going to spoil my day!"

"Let me suggest that you add a cloak to your costume. The wind is really raw, and though the carriage is closed, I noticed as I came over it was distinctly draughty."

"I shall have more the appearance of a traveller than an afternoon caller, with this long,



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close affair"—she commented, as he deftly assisted her into her garment.

"Better that, than a cold. You can leave the cloak in the brougham, when not needed,"—and in a few minutes they were rolling swiftly across to Broadway to the place of exhibition of the great painting of the "Russian Marriage Feast."

Daphne stood and looked—while Belden stood meanwhile looking, at her. "Oh," she sighed, "it is wonderful! In technique, in superb coloring, it is a veritable *tour de force*! Archaeologically, it must be a marvel of truthfulness. How barbarically sumptuous! But oh! I would not like to live with it!"

"Why?"

"Because it is a cruel thing. The knowing, leering faces of the older women, the heavy-feeding, deep-drinking, lustful men, boldly appraising the beauty of the frightened girl, standing like a slave, ready to mount the block—it's cruel!"

"But," remonstrated Belden, "the groom, who is handsome, unveils the bride proudly. He admires her—he will love her?"

"For a little time, yes," agreed Daphne bitterly, "but sentiment will not last long. The timid, pretty bride, and the gallant young groom, will also become heavy-feeders, deep-

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drinkers and carnal-minded. Through all the splendor here you read the underlying carnality. A great picture, but not one to live with."

Belden noted a little twitching of the eyelid, and saw Daphne's hand go up at it, as she gave a gasp of pain—but speaking no word of complaint, she turned to move down the room.

Then she stopped before a canvas scarce larger than her own handkerchief. Her face became literally radiant with pleasure. "Oh!" she breathed, "Oh, to own that!"

He winced at her words, for the thought of this beloved woman practicing self-denial and economy, always gave him a stabbing pain to the heart. And of late he had frequently said to himself, "There are just two things before which wealth sinks to mere useless dross—death, and a pure woman's pride." And then turned to look curiously at the picture she wanted.

Darkly umbrageous, it showed a small opening in a dense wood, where night was already settling. The greens almost black. In the foreground a shallow pool, scarce more than a puddle after rain—yet in it was reflected all the fiery glory of the unseen sky. That little splash of color showed there in the darkening wood, with the redness of crushed rubies; and at the left, the under edges of the black-green leaves,

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and the edges of the tree boles were touched with coppery light, that told, how beyond the forest the sun had set in matchless splendor.

"Never," said Belden, "have I seen such power of suggestion. In this airless, close-crowded corner of a darkened forest, with no sky, but a reflection in a mud puddle, one is yet convinced of the blinding splendor of a sunset one cannot see."

"I wonder," said Daphne, in an abstracted manner, "if he meant anything, that artist? Was he painting a message to the disheartened, to remind them by that muddy little puddle's reflection of the glory of the heaven above it, that the poorest, humblest of us may reflect the God who made us in his own image?" She sighed—then laughed a little.

"You will call me a sentimentalist, but all the same that is a picture to live with."

In his mind he promised she should have it—by hook or by crook—but he answered her, "I call you a very keen, if untrained, critic of art."

"Oh, no—no! No critic! I have not knowledge nor experience to be a skilled judge of art. I only know what pleases me personally, and why."

"Shall we give this to the church people?" he asked teasingly.

"Good gracious, no!" she cried. "They

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would abhor it. Get a *femme de chambre* dropping over a wall a letter with a very red seal on it. Or an empire-gowned, wax-doll beauty, facing a mirror with a powder puff poised for use. Then there will be desperate bidding, should it be auctioned off."

"You are a wicked little wretch!" he exclaimed. "But you have made our task of selection easy."

Shortly after they found a barley-sugar, young person in a luxurious French interior, with a box of jewels on one side, and a letter and a faded rose at the other, as she sat with hands clasped between them, "Making Her Choice."

"What a pity we can't have a lottery," cried Daphne, "the women would risk the price of their winter hats to take chances. Well at any rate they will bid themselves dizzy at the auction, and our own sick poor will profit. I do so thank you for your too generous offering, Mr. Belden. The ladies will formally accept your gift, and express their gratitude in writing in a few days."

Her hand went to her face again, as she asked, "Shall we go up Broadway a couple of blocks? I wish to secure some foreign photographs of royalties for my booth."

He bowed consent, asking her to sit just a

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moment, while he spoke to the proprietor. He ordered the French artist's "A Forest Interior," put aside for him, paid for the other, and hurried back to Daphne, whose face was contracted with savage pain. He assisted her with her cloak, and escorted her to the carriage.

She made brave efforts to smile and chat. As she stepped again to the sidewalk, the wind struck upon her face with such distressing effect, that for a few seconds she stood still with her face buried in her two protecting hands. Inside she caught up at random a half-dozen pictures; then as she waited for the package, she lifted distressed eyes, and said: "My dear Mr. Belden, I wonder if you will make my excuses to Mrs. Dunham. My face is in torture—my nerves seem all on edge. I could not contain myself through music, chat and tea."

"God's fairest," he whispered. "Never ask—command, and I obey! Your excuses will be made. Shall I take you to a physician for some relief, or do you prefer Dr. Keith's ministrations?"

A wan, little smile flickered across her white face. "I think we had better drive directly home." He handed her into the carriage, and following her, they turned toward the old Keith home—fully an hour and a half before they had intended.

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After Mrs. Keith's departure from the house, nurse Lena had slipped out for some ruffling with which to finish trimming some childish garments, and no sooner was she gone than the little ones began a room to room visitation through the house, avoiding only Olive's. Growing bolder, minute by minute, they finally, like a pair of small burglars, crept softly down the stairs, not knowing great-dad was away too.

Lena's few minutes became beautifully elongated, because she was coyly conversing with a big young policeman.

Daphne-May clambered up on the sideboard, and secured a bunch of grapes, and so carefully and thoroughly instructed young Mr. Keith how to eat them without danger to his health, that he stood by a chair seat and carefully swallowed all the skins and seeds, and left the rejected pulps on the chair.

Then he caught sight of Tummy on the window-cushion, and, reaching up, he caught the cat's tail, and with a happy gurgle, he pulled with all his might.

In a moment more, Olive, reading upstairs, in dressing gown and slippers, heard a jarring fall, and Daphne-May's young voice screaming at full force:

"Mamma! Lena! Aunt Olive! Oh, come—come quick!" and flying down the stairs met the child's agonized explanation.

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"Tummy is chasin' hisself all over the dining room, and breakin' everything—and he's jumpin' at baby bruver! Oh, see—see!"

Little Mr. Keith, stricken with mortal terror, stood still, and a few feet off the jet-black cat with lashing tail and blazing eyes, crouched, contracting and extending his claws, and weaving from side to side, prepared for the spring.

With a cry Olive caught the child by the arm and flung him behind her, in the instant of his fall and cry, the cat struck against her knees—her loosely coiled hair fell.

She felt the cat's claws through her thin skirts, and flung her arms up and screamed, "Clutterbuck—come, quick!"

The animal with distended tail, hissing, and spitting, loosened its claws from her clothing, and sprang as high as her waist. Thankful for the protection of her corset, she grew braver and thought to soothe the creature, and gasping "Tummy—Tummy—poor Tummy," attempted to lay a stroking hand upon its head. With a long, wailing howl, it bit at her furiously, and freeing its front claws, it began to clamber higher—a spitting, hissing, murderously maddened thing!

Olive realized her desperate danger, and called to the immovable children, "Run—run away!" Then she caught both hands about the

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neck of the maddened cat, clenched them hard, shut teeth and eyes, and held on! Her one conscious thought was—"Eternity—eternity! Who would have believed eternity so long!"

She had not strength to scream and hold on too. She heard the ripping of her silk skirt under the furious clawing of hind feet, the awful, half-strangled hissings, the soul sickening writhings! Would they never weaken or stop?

Her strength was failing—and the children? Oh, God, the children! She felt they were still in the room. Yes, her strength was going! One long, ear-piercing cry, "Philip! Philip! Oh, Philip!"

The doctor, returning for his case, dashed into the room—saw—understood! He closed his hands below Olive's. There followed a hideous, dull crackling of bones—a thud of something thrown—a sort of dim vision of Clutterbuck drawing two children from the room, and then Olive Marr felt her cousin Philip receive her, turn her face to his breast; weak and shaken into a half-faint, while the doctor, greatly moved by her pluck and by her loyalty to what was his, showered kisses on her half-hidden face.

Through the partly open front door, with Philip's key still in the lock, entered Daphne and her escort. She was remarking that Page



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was in fault again, when she gave a cry of agony at what she saw—believing herself again and more shamefully betrayed.

Olive, loosely clad, with fallen hair, lying in Philip's arms, receiving the kisses with which he punctuated his fond words: "There's nothing dear, to fear now! If there's any blame it cannot touch you—you brave, loving girl! You devoted and loyal child!"

Belden, looking past Daphne's shoulder, saw with his man's eye, what she did not; saw that however agitated Philip was, he was not the victim of an overwhelming passion; was positive the condemning situation was somehow capable of explanation, and for one flashing moment he felt a gentleman's impulse to counsel patient investigation. But the ruling passion was too strong within him. Here was, perhaps, his long watched for opportunity. Honor went overboard. He added to the wife's shame and horror, by exclaiming, as one aghast!—"Good God! what brazen treachery!"

"To turn my home into a hot-bed of vice!" moaned Daphne, clinging desperately to the drapery of the drawing room door. Then suddenly she cried aloud, as Philip bent over to look more closely at Olive's quiet face, "Oh, Judas! Judas! Judas! Ever betraying with a kiss!"

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Startled, the doctor made a move to put Olive from him, but his wife's voice cried out, "No—keep her! You have nothing to fear! Keep her in your arms, and in your heart—you are worthy of each other!"—and with a bitter cry she turned and fled from the house, like one bereft of reason.

Belden followed swiftly after, but she was already far down the street. "Follow!" he commanded his men as he rushed after her.

The footman scrambled to his place, and as the horses began to move, Dr. Keith appeared and called out, "Stop—stop that carriage!"

The two figures going east turned the corner. The doctor ran bare-headed, and dragged open the carriage door. "Where's Mr. Belden?" he demanded.

The coachman pointed west with his whip. "Mr. Belden, sir, followed the lady, going that way, when he dismissed me," he grumbled sullenly.

Philip slammed the door of the carriage, and turned to the west—but returned presently for his hat.

Belden following Daphne's hurrying figure, cried, "Child! child! where are you going?"

"To the river—where all homeless and disgraced women go!"

He dared not touch her—she was wild with

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pain, and shame, and intense excitement. He kept along beside her—that was all.

But her hurrying gait was wasting her small strength. People began to notice, too. He looked back anxiously and saw the carriage was coming.

As she crossed the crowded avenue, Daphne tripped upon her skirt's flounce at the curb, and almost fell prostrate. Belden caught her, signalled the carriage, and lifted her in, crying, "Straight ahead!"—and got away from a growing crowd.

A couple of blocks further on, he pulled the cord. Then to the footman, speaking very low, he asked, "Have you any money about you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get back home by the quickest possible way!"

"I can sprint it, sir, the quickest of all."

"Yes, and have a crowd after you before you reach Fourth Avenue. No; go by cab or car—only make haste! Tell Anton to stop for nothing, but come with utmost speed to the Grand Central Depot—lowest door, west side. And there wait till I come—no matter when! He will understand. Now rush!"

With a touch of the hat, the groom was off, and Belden, leaning out said, rapidly, sharply, "Wilkins, take me to Dr. Darrows'—Fortieth

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Street, just east of Fifth Avenue—south side. I forget the number, but the sign is very distinct. You understand? Then stop for nothing, and hurry like the devil!"

Inside, he drew down the curtains, and looked at Daphne, as she lay in a sort of heap, her head far back. The lashes of her closed eyes pearly thick with tears, a visible throbbing in her round throat, a small quivering of nerves and muscles at temple and eye, one hand clenched against her breast, short shudders running over her body—she breathed in long sighs, and twice he caught a hint of laughter.

He knew what that meant—violent hysteria, and dreaded it from his soul! He touched her hand—'twas like ice. "Why don't that fool drive?" he grumbled. At the same moment, by aid of the sagging curtain, he saw a policeman gesticulating—heard his shrill whistle.

"Good—right!" he muttered, and then sat, hands clenched, his dark face set, every nerve tense, his eyes fixed unseeingly upon the cushions opposite—and thought. Thought intensely—desperately, as he may never in his life have thought before.

At length he drew a long, long breath, lifted his head, threw back his shoulders. His plan was made—now to carry it out! "Everything else must wait," he muttered. "If fate lets me

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but get her safely out of this city—I'll ask no more of man or God! I'll only ask of her!"

The carriage lurched around the corner, leaving the paint of the wheels on the curb stone. One horse stumbled, but Wilkins caught him on a strong wrist, and they stopped with a suddenness that nearly hurled the half-unconscious Daphne from the seat. Both hands flew to her head—a wailing cry escaped her.

Belden sprang out, ordered Wilkins to get down and guard the carriage door. "The lady is wild with pain—she must not descend!" he commanded. "The horses are too blown to move!"

He disappeared inside the house. The street was quiet. It was already growing dusk. Daphne's moans were barely heard by Wilkins.

Presently the doctor ran down the steps and entered the carriage with Belden, who raised a curtain.

"Be very careful, doctor," he warned. "She has never used the drug—but this journey must go on!"

The doctor's quick eye took in conditions. "A pretty stiff attack of neuralgia, and hysteria coming fast."

He passed the prepared hyperdermic syringe to Belden, and bent his head to Daphne's heart a moment—then felt her pulse. Then he

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pushed her sleeve up as high as possible, and injected five minims of Magendie's solution. Withdrew, banged the door, cried to Wilkins, "Grand Central Depot—Hudson River side!"—and disappeared indoors.

At the appointed place Anton was standing, panting. "Get an invalid chair," ordered Belden. "And after go to a jeweller's or somewhere and get a lady's imported traveling-bag. Take it to a druggist's, and have all the receptacles filled—toilet water, creams, perfumes, powders, etc.—you understand. Then bring it here with my bags, and if you can't make the train I'm waiting for, follow by next!" Without any word Anton turned away to instant obedience.

Next morning, dull and heavy from the effects of the opiate, Daphne opened her bewildered eyes in the drawing room of a sleeping car, at the rapping of the Pullman conductor—who awaited, and assisted her through the car, and down the steps to where Belden was standing by a carriage.

He helped her in with profound deference of manner. She gazed about, almost stupidly, "Where are we?" He smiled. "What place is this?" she insisted.

"This?—this is Montreal," he answered pleasantly.

## CHAPTER IX.

### STOLEN.

Wrapped about with pride as in a mantle, Mrs. Keith sat speechless, motionless. Dazedly, stupidly, her mind seemed to plod around and around one small circle utterly unable to break through at any point.

"I am here in a strange city, with a man who is not my husband." Then a shudder of abhorrence shook her as she saw a mental picture of Olive Marr, lightly clad with falling hair lying in Philip's arms, accepting his caresses, his endearing words. She recalled the agony of that home betrayal, the loathing and the shame, the torturing pain through face and eyes.

Then she had felt the power of the river drawing her, heard its soft lipping and lapping about the close-set greenish piles, and being homeless and alone, she had obeyed the water's call. She—yes, she thought she had run, and perhaps fallen—only there was the awful pain. And she had begun to float softly and gently, and Olive's great coil of chestnut hair had slowly turned into a writhing serpent, that struck at her many times.

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Now she was here in a strange place, with this man, who was not her husband—and so the circle was again complete, and she had learned nothing.

The drive was very short. They descended before the big stone hotel. From sheer force of habit her eyes took note that this house was called the Windsor, and some vague, vagabond thought turned for a moment to the glory of England's Windsor.

Then Mr. Belden had escorted her to a chair in a retired position, and asking her patience for a moment had turned to the office.

As lightning sometimes rips the midnight sky apart, giving all the countryside its natural colors for the moment, so in that flashing instant, Daphne saw the full horror of the situation; her hopeless position toward this man, whose companion she had somehow become without her own consent or will.

Her apathy of mind was gone; her brain was working swiftly. Womanlike, in danger, her first impulse was flight. She rose and swiftly turned toward the front door. But instantly a uniformed attendant laid his arm across the lock, and she understood. He had been warned not to let her pass.

She stood helplessly. Her proud delicacy made a scene impossible. She turned to the



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weapons of the weak, she called up all her woman's finesse, dissimulation and cunning.

At the office counter a gentleman ahead of Belden was slowly and carefully entering his name in the guest book. As he dropped the pen and reached out for the room-key the clerk extended, Belden dipped the pen, and in that instant Daphne's inspiration came.

It was a desperate chance, but it might win a temporary safety, swiftly she reached Belden's side; her hand was on his arm; her face was white as marble; her voice low and calm, but very distinct.

"Brother," she said, and then again. "Brother, don't waste time in inspecting and comparing rooms this morning.. As far as I am concerned, take whatever offers, that I may quickly retire, and see a doctor. You have a resident physician, I suppose?" she asked the clerk.

"Yes, madam, but he is not about just yet. In a half hour I can send him to you, if you wish. Ah, yes—I will not fail to send him at once to your room."

"Thanks," she murmured, and turned away to her former seat.

At the word "Brother," spoken so naturally, so calmly by Daphne, the red blood had surged up into Belden's face. For a moment he caught

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his lip under sharp white teeth, and the pen had wavered in his hand. Then he had answered, "Yes, dear, I'll make all the haste I can"—had crossed out the word or two already written and registered as Mr. Selwyn Brown, and sister, Miss Dora Brown, of Albany, N. Y.

When he turned from the desk, the clerk had looked at the erased words, and made them out to be "Mr. and Mr.—." "Ha! ha!—well family resemblances doesn't cut much ice with the Browns, of Albany! Must be quite a difference between the ages of this brother and sister, too. Lord! Lord! We hotel people see funny things!"

Daphne had pleaded frantically with the doctor to establish a nurse in her room. He intimated that a nurse was not really needed, but her mounting excitement caused him to change his mind, and she felt with the quiet nurse on guard, she had secured twenty-four hours of safety, in which to arrange her confused thoughts, to plan for escape.

"To go—to go where?"—for the world at this moment held her to be an outcast, disgraced, dishonored! But she knew herself sinless; her children had a right to love her! Her children! "Oh, God! Oh, God!" she wailed, "Daphne-May and my little Philip!"

She saw at last what her reckless flight from

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her dishonored home would cost her. "And yet, I have not stumbled," she moaned, and knew in her heart a woman must avoid even the appearance of evil.

"But, dear heaven! I cannot live without my babes! I—I will return! It is Philip who is guilty—not I! I will demand my little ones—they are my flesh, my blood, my very soul! He may keep his freedom! I will endure all things, so long as I regain my children. I will be brave! I will tell the truth! And Philip must believe me, for I never lied to him in my life! But have I the necessary money for expenses?"

She gasped in terror—then opened the little underpocket she had worn on her way to the picture gallery in New York, and drew out the envelope, and on finding the contents safe, broke into laughter and kissed the fresh, crisp banknotes that meant her rescue. Across the hall in the open door of another suite of rooms, sat Stanley Belden, a book upon his knee, but his slow, dark eyes fixed steadily upon the doors beyond which Daphne had entrenched herself.

The next afternoon, while the nurse was out buying a few articles for Daphne's use, Belden had come to the door of her sitting room, and asked for admittance—saying low, "I have a

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pass-key, Daphne, do not force me to use it. But see you I must—see you!” Then after a pause, “I will!”

She opened the door and he entered. He noted at a glance that the flowers he had sent her earlier by Anton had not been rearranged, but lay there stiffly crowded together.

He took her hands very gently and looked at her with haggard eyes. Three sleepless nights, one of gambling, one of traveling, and another of watching, had told upon him. His features looked drawn, his movements were heavy.

Her eyes too were weary from vain watching for an opportunity to slip unnoticed from the house. If she feared him, her haughty head held high, her proud unsmiling mouth betrayed nothing of the feeling. Beautiful, cold, merciless, she appeared to him.

Yesterday, on reaching Montreal, he had thrilled with triumph, circumstances he felt were too strong for her, opportunity was his, and he had but to claim her. And then her pride, and purity, and woman's wit had, after all, controlled circumstances and blocked opportunity. And now, weary, worn, devoured with passion, he remembered his boast, “I will ask nothing of God or Devil! I'll only ask of her!”—and knew for a moment the anguished intensity of doubt of the man about to make a last plea for his life.

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It was Daphne who broke the silence first:  
"Mr. Belden, by what right have you forced yourself into my life like this?"

"Fate thrust me into your life long years ago, *m'adoré!*"

"You brought me here without consent of mine—by what authority have you acted?"

"By the authority of a devouring, unconquerable love!"

"Love?" she repeated, proudly resentful.  
"What is your love to me, a wife?"

"A wife?" he questioned significantly.

"Yes, a wife! Long an unhappy one, if you please, but pure and loyal. Marriage vows made to God may not be loosened for mere unhappiness. Only by crime can they be broken!"

"And your unworthy husband has criminally broken faith with you, and given you two rivals at the least, in the heart you still hold precious."

She winced, but went steadily on. "His sin does not release me from loyalty—I am still his wife!"

For the first time he used brutality of speech.  
"Indeed, and under the present circumstances, how long do you think he will be in taking another wife?"

She stared at him—then with a sharp cry, hid her eyes against the backs of her interlaced

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fingers. She swayed a little, and cried, "Oh, God! my life is ended! dead and done with!"

He drew down her hands, and, covering them with kisses, insisted, "No, your life is just begun. Let me take you away from every one. The past is dead, Daphne, but we have the present and the future!"

She dragged her hands away, "Leave me!" she commanded. "Leave me at once!"

"No!" he said, "No! in every other thing and forever I will obey you. But never, now so long as my body is responsive to my will, shall I leave you!"

He drew her to the sofa, and sank on one knee before her, speaking in choked, husky tones. "I am your slave, your knight, your devotee! Come to a home of my making, God's fairest. To a kingdom of love, where shame and sorrow can touch you no more! Fate meant you for me, Daphne! It is not too late—come to me, beloved! We can find happiness together even yet! What does it matter what anyone thinks? We can defy the world and ignore it!"

The red of indignation swept over her white face. "Oh, what infamy!" she gasped.

"Infamy?" he flung back savagely. "You may hold me in slight esteem, may consider my life to be ignobly idle and selfish—but even so,

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I fail to see the 'infamy' of asking a worshipped woman to be my wife! To wear my name and to guard my honor to the grave!"

She stretched her arm against the sofa back, and rested her forehead on it. Tears rose to her eyes. Wounded and shamed, she had misunderstood. "Pardon," she whispered faintly. "Pardon."

But he went on urgently, desperately. "Perhaps you care for the world, for its good opinion, its approval? My beloved, if you do, I'll whip it to you, and you shall set your little foot upon its neck! It is natural for you to rule, and rule you shall! Only love me, dear! Daphne, you are very cruel to me, and to me only. Your heart is a fount of tenderness for every other thing that suffers—and I suffer, and yet you are coldly serene!"

He lifted such pleading eyes to hers; he looked so worn and old. She saw lines in his face never noticed before. He had been such a gracious companion; such a considerate and devoted friend—stately, yet debonnaire, and now he looked—like this! A wave of pity surged high in her heart.

"I am sorry," she said drearily, "but I think I have exhausted my power of loving."

He recalled the passionate longing showing in her virgin eyes, as she left the altar with

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Philip, and with a groan dropped his head on Daphne's knee. Long restrained passion pulled hard against the leash of reason and self control. The blood rushed through his veins like fire. The faint warmth of her body struck through her garments to his cheek, and every nerve in his great body thrilled at her nearness.

Some evil spirit, like a veritable presence, whispered in his ear, "You have ensnared this lovely woman, but you have not won her. Cannot bribe, cajole or charm her. Recall the past. Did even violation give you pause then? Ask—if denied—take!"

He gave a short laugh, lifted his head, looked at her with the devil in his face. Her heart plunged in her side! He saw a throbbing in her soft throat, and reaching, pressed his lips upon the little brown mole—the devil's beauty mark—and drew one hand in a brutal caressing sweep adown her lovely body.

She made no sound, only struggled, fiercely struggled to her feet.

"Since you refuse to my pleading the merest alms of love," he muttered, "why may I not take all? You are powerless."

Her lips trembled a little, but her eyes were cool and steady upon his half-closed, burning



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ones, as she answered gently, "I think—I think—because you are still a gentleman."

Her cold aloofness struck across his passion with the effect of a dash of water across his burning face. With an oath he was on his feet, and strode to the window, where his heavy body bulked large against the wide draperies.

Presently he turned: "You are mistaken, Daphne. You are safe from my madness, not because I am a gentleman, but because for the first time in my life, I love another better than myself. This last, maddest passion of my life has changed with a love so great that I long first to serve you, to secure your happiness, my beloved!"—and in that moment reached his life's highest point of feeling.

"And yet," he groaned, "you will not believe me?"

"Almost, I think I do now," she answered slowly.

He was at her side, pressing a fold of her gown to his lips, as he pleaded: "Then trust me! Oh, I will be considerate, my imperial love!—of your pride, your dignity, your gracious calm—until the blessed day, when the doors of every house of mine swing open to your coming!"

She knew herself without relatives, without means, without asylum. Knew scandal clouded

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her name. This man was rich and powerful, and loved her. He would lift her above those who had mocked and betrayed her.

Belden held her hands, and drew her very gently to him: "Trust me, Daphne!" he entreated. He touched her forehead with his lips, "Give me your promise?"

For one moment she seemed to yield. Then with a cry of anguish, she gasped, "My children! My little children! I cannot—oh, I cannot do it! Heaven itself would be but desert desolation without them. I have left them scarce forty-eight hours, and already my soul is torn with an agony of longing for them! Mr. Belden, I could not live, would not even try to live without my children!"

Deadly silence fell between them. He stared above her head into vacancy, while her sapphire-blue eyes rested almost wildly on his absorbed face.

Then his color rose—his eyes began to sparkle. Presently he lifted his shoulders and threw them back, a trick of his when reaching a conclusion.

"Listen!" he commanded. "God's fairest, listen! We will dicker and bargain a little, shall we? I want you—God knows how much I want you!—I will buy you? Wait, my sweet! Until you hear the price I offer! I'll pay for

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your dear self, one small girl and one baby boy! Will you call that a bargain? I will have you—and you will have the price—two little children?”

Daphne's face flushed all over, and paled. “You could not—you have not the power!”

“I am not so sure,” he smiled. “At all events, I'll try to move both heaven and earth, to restore to you your children. I do not think we shall have to pack a jury, or transgress the law either. For outside influence, family standing, and a fortune, of which you have no faintest estimate, can do much.

“If it were the Professor we were to deal with, we might better argue with a wounded tiger. He would fight for the little ones, though he stood on crutches. But the doctor has a commercial strain in his blood; he values money highly, so, too, he values influence in high places. Ah, Daphne, if I were to restore to you your children, will you come to me? Of all the fair women I have known, you are the only one I have ever asked in marriage. Daphne—I am waiting—answer me?”

Her eyes burned like blue fire, in the marble whiteness of her face: “If you win me my children—”

“By God, I will!”

“To keep—to rear—(he bowed his head)—I will—if the law permits—I will!”

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"Daphne, darling!" he almost whispered, "Daphne!" He took her head between his hands, he kissed her brows, but dared not trust himself to touch her lips—he so feared to revolt, to repel her! He drew her to him, holding her two hands against his great shoulders, his slow moving, heavy lidded eyes devouring her loveliness.

He threw up his head with a triumphant laugh: "The world shall bow to your beauty, sweet. I'll crown this dear head with the jewels of an empress! I'll wrap this precious body in the laces you adore! You shall no longer be oppressed by an atmosphere of unfaithfulness! Grief and shame shall touch you no more!"

He closed his arms about her, and buried his face in the warm darkness of her hair. He drew in a long inhalation of its faint perfume.

She felt the heavy shiver that passed over him. His neck thickened; the letter Y began to throb into view on his forehead. He clung hard to self-control, and went on speaking.

"Never again shall you know the deadly insult of receiving a husband's letter of brutal passion for another woman!"

He halted—for Daphne's body had stiffened, became rigid in his arms. She drew back her head, and looked at him with contemptuous eyes, blue and cold as ice. She wrenched her-

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self free, and looking him straight in the eyes, said:

"You were the sender of that anonymous letter, Mr. Belden. Otherwise, you could never have known the nature of its contents. Ah, you are vile!"—and she made a little gesture of repulsion.

He stammered for a moment, then broke out, "None the less that letter was the expression of your husband's brutal passion for another!"

"And your sending it to me was an expression of your own brutality. Ah, you were vulgar—you were cowardly! And I have held you my friend, and called you gentleman, and—and was striving even now to forgive you much, because I believed you loved much! Love! Oh, the undying animal in man!"

He took a step toward her—stopped, and turned his head, as if listening intently, muttering half under his breath, "In the very moment of seeming attainment, she will slip from your arms forever!" and a wailing cry broke from his lips.

"Oh, damn you! Damn you, and your prophecy!" he cried at space.

He turned to Daphne. The great Y stood solid, black, and menacing against his brow. He spoke thickly.

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"Daphne—forgive—it was my love—for you—your promise holds—dear?"

She shrank in loathing from him: "I'd rather destroy my life with my own hands, than merge it with yours!"

She cried—and stopped—terrified! Was he quite mad, she thought, that he wagged his head and mowed at her like a naughty child pulling faces? He lunged heavily toward her; one side of his face was very, very red; one eyelid drew down, one corner of his mouth dragged down into a sort of grotesque, quivering smile. A hand flew to his throat, wrenching at his collar, the other stretched feebly toward her. He hoarsely stammered: "D-Daphne—for Christ's sake—D-Daphne!"—a sort of tremor shook him, and all his great bulk went down with a crash that jarred the room.

With one bound she was at the door. "Anton!" she called, and on the instant he was across the hall, and kneeling at his master's side, tearing off his neckwear, loosening his clothing.

"A doctor—quick!" he commanded.

Daphne sprang to the telephone. "The doctor quick to 222—an accident. Be quick, oh, very quick, please!"

"Water!" demanded Anton.



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She brought it and a towel. There were foot-steps—the doctor was in the room.

The red side of Belden's face still smiled the grotesque, one-sided smile. The doctor was lifting the fallen man's eyelids to peer at the pupils—when Daphne turned and entered the bedroom—pinned on her hat—put on the long cloak—caught up her bag, thrust the few things she had into it, and swiftly, lightly, left the room.

She avoided the lift, and slipped down the stairs. As she neared the door, she heard the clerk say loudly, "Yes, I'll be right up!"

His excited tone drew the attention of the waiting, lounging bell boys. She passed out of the building, and made her way as speedily as she could walk to the depot.

## CHAPTER X.

### A COMPANION IN MISFORTUNE.

As Daphne Keith went hurrying on, her rare beauty received its usual tribute of second glances, long stares and turning heads. She wished she had a thicker veil. She had included one in the small list of necessities she had sent the nurse for, but she had not returned, so there was nothing for it, but to ignore the attention she attracted.

As she turned from the ticket office window, she heard low sobbing. Her heart contracted painfully at the sound. She had not then monopolized all the grief and shame and pain in the world; some other woman wept, poor thing! She wondered if she could be of any service; be of some help—she looked about her.

Not far away, her back turned toward the observers, her face bowed to the wall, in rather old-fashioned clothing, there stood a woman sobbing heavily. Daphne laid a hand upon the woman's arm: "Oh, please don't cry like that," she entreated, "you will make yourself ill." Then as the drooping head was lifted, added



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impulsively, "Why, you are already ill! Come and sit down. Here is a bottle of lavender salts. May I get you some water?"

She was evidently but recently from a sick bed; her dress hung emptily upon her, her skin was sallow, her lips pale. Dark, purplish half-circles were drawn beneath weary dulled brown eyes. Her thin black hair was banded down either side her wasted face. As she made an effort to control her tears, and thank Daphne for her kindness, her speech proclaimed her a gentlewoman, and by a slight accent French.

"Has some misfortune overtaken you, madame? Can I in any way assist you?" asked Daphne gently.

"Oh, mademoiselle," answered the poor woman, "I am the true daughter of misfortune. I have but now left the hospital, and was going to New York by this evening's train there to join one most true friend, who was to help me back to my own dear land, to France, mademoiselle.

"After all the long years of drudgery, beating into stupid little heads the music, the drawing, the French. Ah, but it is, that I am weary! And I have fallen ill, and the savings go. And I am more ill, and rest long at the hospital. Then I have my chance—my one beautiful chance! And I hurry for the depot.

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For the economy I crowd into the street car, mademoiselle. And then I stand at the window there, and I see my ticket on the little shelf before my so happy eyes! And then I go to pay, and—ah, I am robbed! My purse is gone!

"And so it comes, I am without home, I am too sick to work, but not quite sick to die. I am helpless to reach my friend in New York—I face but that House of Alms. Shall you wonder that I weep?"

She handed back the salts bottle. "I make my thanks, mademoiselle. You have the noble heart. But permit me in the name of my age to ask. You do not travel without a chaperone? Ah, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! it is impossible! You are far too beautiful—there is danger in such independence, mademoiselle."

Daphne smiled, and corrected, "I am a 'madam' these seven years."

"That surprises me—but does not dim your beauty or lessen your need of a chaperone." She sighed, and rose weakly to her feet. She looked about forlornly, bent her head and said, "adieu, madame!"

People began to hurry; a couple of laughing men ran to the ticket window. "Hold my bag, please, madame," said Daphne, and she, too, ran to the window, purchased a second ticket to New York, and with eyes like stars came hurry-

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ing back saying, "Perhaps, madame, you will consent to act as chaperone of this little trip?"

But the sick woman could not jest. A light came into her wet eyes. She kissed the hand that offered her the precious ticket. "God's messenger of hope!" she breathed. "Madame has given me a chance for life!"

And the grim Fates who spin the thread and weave the web and fabric of Life; who had wearied of the simple pattern of Daphne's, were tangling the filling, casting the shuttles wildly back and forth to work out in the web of some dim hurly-burly of their own; while the oldest, fiercest of the grim sisters, she who wields the shears and clips life short at her own stern will reached with open shears to snip the thread of life—whose was it? "Two women shall be grinding together. One shall be taken, the other left"—but which?

On entering the car Daphne met her own reflection in a glass, and felt a faint thrill at its loveliness, and a feeling of wonder that the anger and shame, the terror and grief she had suffered these last few days had not somehow greatly changed her. But the proud eyes held all their gem-like brilliance and color, and their lashes drooped softly against the warm whiteness of her cheeks; while the curved red of her mouth was like a flower. The glory of her hair

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swept away from the lovely brows in those deep dented ripples beloved of sculptors.

As she looked, there strangely came to her the memory of the old negress fortune teller. She heard the malicious laughter, the venomous railing words: "Mak' deh mos' of yer proud moon-white beauty, w'ile yer has it. Yer'll lose it in an instant, and forever! An' min' you shiel' dat rite side of yer face, jist wen it's at its lov'list!"

"Why should I guard it?" she thought. "What good thing has beauty ever brought me? It has not helped me to keep my husband's love—and yet it is God's gift. I love beauty in whatever form I meet it."

She turned away. The French woman's back was toward her, no other passengers had entered yet, the brakeman and conductor were standing outside. Acting on an inexplicable impulse, swift as lightning she turned back, looked intently in the glass, then slowly pressed her lips to that reflected Daphne, as if she were saying farewell.

Blushing scarlet at her unaccountable act, she sought a seat, never guessing that coming events might be casting long shadows before them.

She unbuttoned the long cloak, that was much too warm. She longed for the starting

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of the train. Every moment she dreaded to see Anton entering the car. Of course that was folly, she told herself. Anton could not harm her—yet if only the train would move.

The French woman came and sat beside her, and she was grateful for the companionship. It helped her to forget that heavy fallen body, that grotesque, one-sided smile back there at the Windsor. She told herself that cruelly as Mr. Belden had taken advantage of her, she would not have left him there stricken and alone, but Anton was with him. Anton, who adored him, and would move heaven and earth to his master's service. But she wished she could forget that last stammering, pleading cry, "For Christ's sake, Daphne!"

"Madame Denise Varide is my name," she heard the old woman saying. She drew a letter from the small wrist bag she carried. "You see—V-a-r-i-d-e—Varide. The old governess to whom you have given a last hope in life. Ah, it is not the beloved native land alone that draws me, madame. It is the grave of *la petite*—my only little one. To press my lowly breast against that spot on earth. Ah, it will draw away many a pain, will the touch of that little grave.

"Ah—ah! we move—that is good to get away from the stupid little English! See you, *ma*

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*belle*, so long have I said *J'ai*—I have, *Tu as*—thou hast, *Il a*—he has, *Vous avez*—you have; so many thousand times, that should I sleep, and should the house burn, and should you shake me awake, in the light of the flames, I should answer you, *J'ai*—I have, *Tu as*—thou hast, *Il a*—he has! Ah! they are fatiguing, those stolid little English children! You smile, you have not the belief? Wait until you try it, madame. The repetition! the repetition. But, madame, I speak the impossible. I have the folly. My happiness makes me talk foolishness. A governess, you? It is indeed to laugh!”

A quick shudder ran over Madame Varide's body. She clasped her hands hard and tight. “Bah!” she ejaculated. “It is that one stands upon my grave. Well, then, I wish they would not. You know, you Americans, that superstition? Yes? So I thought. It is nothing—oh, of course it is less than nothing. Only I do not like that shudder, that thought of one standing on my grave. It is not gentle—it is not kind.”

Oddly at that moment a little shudder ran visibly over Daphne. Madame Varide saw; exclaimed excitedly and laughing all the time. “Then one cannot leave my grave without stepping on yours, madame. Truly, then, we must

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be going to take our long rest side by side. Well, I could not meet a sweeter face at great Gabriel's call!" and she laughed more gleefully than before.

"Madame! Madame!" warned Daphne, "you are what the Scotch call 'fey.'"

"And what is that?"

"It is a state of excitement, of gaiety without just cause; wildly high spirits, presaging ill-luck or disaster."

"Ah, then let me be 'fey.' I have not known happiness for so long—I have been so long alone, I welcome companionship even of our graves. It would be good to greet you first in the great 'new day.'"

"But you would not recognize me," adapting herself to the old governess's whimsical attitude of mind. "The oracle has spoken! I am forewarned; my good looks are to be destroyed before my death. You will not know then the unbeautiful woman who may face you."

Madame Varide leaned close, and impulsively kissed her young benefactress's cheek, "You would be beautiful even if your face were sabre slashed. It is the pure live flame within that gives the alabaster vase its glow."

She frowned, hunched up her shoulders like one cold, and reached for the shabby, unlined, black cape, she had carried over her arm before,

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and wrapped it closely about her. Her laughter ceased, she spoke less often, folded her hands close beneath her arms, though the car was unpleasantly warm. Her face became waxen white.

"Madame, are you ill?"

"I—I am cold—that's all," she answered with a forced smile. "And so very thirsty." Daphne rose instantly—but Madame Varide drew her down again. "Do not—I d-dare not drink, just now. I—I am much s-shamed to confess. I—I am threaten-ed with a chill. I—I have the c-chill and the fever—not quite s-shaken off, madame. Ah, if I—I were not so c-cold!"

Daphne slipped off her long cloak, drew the shivering woman to her feet, removed the cape, and in a moment had her arms in the sleeves, and was buttoning the garment to the bottom, when she heard from behind the chattering teeth, the exclamation, "*Ciel*, h-h-how p-p-pretty!"

Madame Varide was a French woman, chill and all she could still appreciate an ornament, for glittering on the lapel of the coat was that most beautiful and valuable scarab, received two years before from Belden. "It—is—a—veritable a-a-antique. *N'est-ce-pas*, madame?"

Daphne tied the old teacher's thick veil about her head, rolled up the cape and placed it as a



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small cushion for her cheek to rest against, and commanded her to sit quite still, and perhaps she would get warm, may be nap a little. Then as she would talk, Daphne moved, and as the car was nowise crowded, took another seat. She watched the worn and wasted face. "Life has been very cruel to her—poor, lonely woman!"

The brakeman passing through, picked up a fallen wrist bag, and offered it to her. She recognized it as Madam Varide's, and thanking the man, slipped the bag upon her own wrist—she would not disturb the owner, who seemed to be dozing.

"Poor soul!" she thought. "She goes to seek her little dead child. I go to seek my living ones. Oh, Daphne-May, my soul! Oh, my man-child Philip! My very flesh is hungry for the touch of your wreathing arms!"

Then suddenly it came to her, the thought, "To other eyes I shall be wrapped from head to foot in vile suspicion. I shall go back with all the appearance of evil stamped upon me! Perhaps I—an honest woman, may have to protest my innocence to an Olive Marr, and a Doctor Keith—listening with secret, close-pressed palms!"

No—no! She would not protest, would not explain to those two, who had turned her home

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into a hot-bed of vice! No, she would face the old Professor. If he was fierce, he was honest, and a gentleman. He would read her with clear, wise eyes. He loved the little ones, he would be just to her! Oh, that one mad act! What might it not lead to! Impulse is woman's curse! To one woman's life ruined by vice, there are hundreds ruined by impulse! They cannot resist the too sudden influence acting upon their minds! They cannot stand steady against a force too suddenly communicated. As a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, so a woman, no matter how proud, how pure, how wise, is no stronger than some sudden impulse! The Professor had said the gods made woman for a jest—"My God! What was that?"

A strange backward and forward jerking—a heavy, grating noise. Like lightning she noticed she was directly beneath a lamp. If anything happened! Oh, she was so afraid of fire! She drew close, so close to the side of the car, that her cheek—her right cheek, touched the thick glass of the window.

As she lifted a shielding hand, there was an appalling roar—the car reared upright like a frightened horse—hurling men and women to the bottom end, and as she struck, the world went crashing to its end, and sinking through black chaos, she heard, faintly and far off, the

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cries of its despairing people!—yet, sank—sank to extinction!

“The light—more light here!” Then there was to be a new world!—that was good! So God had begun before. “Let there be light”—and there was light! And again came oblivion.

“Useless any effort—he’s dead. Stop!—this woman’s breathing—she is, I tell you! Quick now—gently—gently!”

Strange that any one should breathe yet—well, she was glad. Something was slowly creeping over her face, but she could not brush it away; she could not move her arm—but that was natural since she was dead. And there was a salty taste of blood in her mouth—that was strange.

Again that far away voice was saying, “Be careful of those trinkets, they may lead to further identification.”

Then something fiery hot in her throat and mouth, made her choke, and heavily, slowly unclose her eyes.

A bloody man was kneeling beside her; the night sky was above her. Another man held a lantern. The first was passing bandaging over her head and beneath her chin, again and again.

“Can you tell me your name?” he asked in a tone of curt kindness. Daphne was silent. He asked again. It was very strange she could not



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think what they had called her before the world had been destroyed. She hoped the bloody man would not be angry—she tried to smile. A pang of anguish followed—then darkness and silence received her again.

And so, for many days and nights, she floated in and out of a vague consciousness, while lying in the General Hospital, on Dorchester street, Montreal.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DEAD, OR ALIVE?

The card above the bed in the hospital bore the name "Denise Varide." Unvisited, unenquired for, she was known to the nurses as the "woman of the double face," one side being so hideously disfigured, the other side beautifully modelled, smooth and young. But one of the hospital staff, old Dr. McNab, knew she was not Denise Varide, unless indeed there were two women of precisely the same name. For he recalled a worn-out old French teacher, Denise Varide by name, so he was sore puzzled, but after his wont remained silent.

An archeologist as well as a surgeon-doctor, learned in ancient things, among his correspondents from the four quarters of the globe for many years he had counted old Professor Keith. So when the cards of Mrs. Philip Galbraith Keith had been found in a small card case in the pocket of her cloak, Dr. McNab had recognized the name at once, and had written to ask, was she his relative, and if so, to break the terrible news as gently as possible; describing briefly the disfigured, unrecognizable, barely

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breathing form they had brought to the hospital to die. Making careful note of the badly burnt fragment of the cloak, the card case, and the rare scarab, which was held to be a final identification. And so the supposed body of Mrs. Philip Galbraith Keith had been sealed in a leaden casket, and had resumed the interrupted journey to New York.

The Professor demanded that the burial should be from the old Keith house, and the doctor doggedly refused. "She left me and mine to go to Belden with his millions. She shall not bring her shame here, even though it be dead. I will not have it so."

"Philip, it was your own sin against your marriage vows that drove Daphne, your wife, to folly and death. Do you forget that you were guilty; that she could have put you away; could have taken your children; could have dragged you through the divorce court. She was too proud, too clean minded for that. She spared you, and had you approached her properly, she would have forgiven you completely. She was very generous, and did nothing by halves.

"But you ate and drank, laughed and larked, without a touch of shame or regret, while your manner towards Olive grew more and more unwise, more humiliating to a haughty spirit like hers; and at last you wore her patience out.

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"I—I fully believe Daphne left this house with some mad idea of punishing you rather than from any illicit love for Stanley Belden. There is something very strange about it all. Where is Belden? Why is Daphne found in this wreck alone, and traveling in this direction?"

"Perhaps," sneered Doctor Keith, "Belden promised more than he meant to fulfill."

"You mean that she might have been leaving him? All the more reason for treating her poor clay with respect. Bring her home, Philip."

"No," sullenly.

"For the children's sake?"

"'Tis for their sake I refuse. They shall not come in faintest contact with her disgrace."

"Philip, you have utterly forgotten the ancient warning, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged!' You were the stronger; it was for you to guide the young life you took. But you set her an example of unfaithfulness. If she has followed it, the fault is yours; you have no right to condemn. But since you know neither mercy nor justice, let me appeal to that quality in your character that seems ever alert and active, the quality of self interest.

"Your popularity as a doctor depends largely upon your moral standing. Your practice is mainly of a family character. It is the reproductive, middle-class woman and her brood, who

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provide two-thirds of it with their commonplace croups, measles and diphtheria; while rarer, more interesting maladies make up the other scant third. And just as some women will not accept a smooth-faced young doctor, associating knowledge only with the beard, so they will not believe in the skill and trustworthiness of the doctor tainted with vice of any kind. They cannot separate the practitioner from the man.

"You must remember Dr. Ackley's end under a feminine boycott, after that divorce of his. The doctor who is mixed up with a scandal is done for. And, my boy, three black-crow stories are already circulating about this square. One story says you forced your wife from the house, and that she was seen weeping as she fled down the street. Another tells of you trying vainly to tear her from the arms of a man in a closed carriage—and people look loweringly at Olive. The servants, who do not like her very well, have evidently hinted at things. And if, by bad luck, the Allingham affair, which is the jest of the clubs, I hear, should become common property, that, taken in conjunction with Daphne's disappearance, would start a scandal powerful enough to deprive you of half your practice.

"Be wise, therefore. Publish the accidental



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death, hold a very private service, and bury your dead wife from her home, as seems most natural and right, and silence the strange rumors afloat by a few explanatory words to her church friends anent her visit to Canada."

"Well—well," hesitated Doctor Keith, "perhaps—only Lena must take the children away in that case. They are too young to receive a shock."

"Shall—shall you open the casket?" stammered the old Professor. And for the first time a tremor crossed the doctor's sullen face. His voice too, shook a little as he answered.

"No—No! They say the havoc wrought is utter and complete. Why should I give myself such a memory? When my only desire is to forget—to forget as quickly as possible. No—no," he repeated, "I do not think I could bear the sight, she had been very lovely, Granddad."

The racing old eyebrows became steady, the piercing eyes stared into space, as he muttered, "Oh, the curse—the curse that ever follows close upon a world moving beauty! In the fierce old days her lovely body and jewel eyes would have devastated a kingdom. To-day, had she not been so angel pure and proud, her matchless beauty would have made her a destroyer of men—and now, now the curse has fallen upon her!"

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His hard old mouth quivered a little at the corners. "I am—yes, I am glad she was killed outright, for such ghastly disfigurement of a perfect face must have driven her mad."

And so it came about that for a few hours crépe somberly draped the doorbell, the drawn shades looked like lowered eyelids, and the old Keith house assumed the conventional appearance of grief; while the strange dead woman made brief and solemn stay in the home of the one who had befriended her.

"Two women had been grinding together—one had been taken, the other left." The woman taken was escorted with cold ceremony to receive the final hospitality of the old Keith burial plot.

She who had been taken was at rest, but she who had been left, lay among strangers, with hideous, slow-healing wounds, and sought dully, persistently through the dim corridors of her mind for the name she had borne in those last years, before the world was ended. Since the commanding words, "Light—more light!" she had had this name Denise Varide—but the old name? She thought it had been Phillippa, but could not be sure, so she had to tell Dr. McNab once more that she had failed, and wondered that he had accepted the disappointment so cheerfully.

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For she could not know that to himself he was daily saying, "When she finds herself, she is going to receive an awful shock—I feel sure of that. Her loss of memory is at present a blessing unqualified."

Life continued in the old Keith house where everything was so like the dead days gone, and yet so unlike. The surroundings were the same, the hours were the same, the family circle had contracted sharply to close the open space that betrayed the loss of one important member.

There was as yet the same domestic staff, and yet things were already changed, and more were changing. The household machinery that had always moved with a silent, smooth precision that seemed magical, now whirled noisily, and worked with many a jerk and jolt. The house service was demoralized since the servants no longer felt the gentle restraint, the moral influence of Mrs. Keith's patiently firm control.

The doctor had ever been a sort of domestic sybarite, enjoying luxuriously, the bodily comforts of a perfectly managed home. The pleasures of the table, the great easy chairs, the trimmed and properly placed student lamp, the easy slippers, the orderly piles of perfectly cared-for garments—all ready to his hand. The deft, silent service, the music when desired, the game

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when demanded, silence if preferred—all these comforts he had enjoyed for years, without any effort of his own, without any word of pleasure or thanks, simply because it all seemed a mere matter of course; there was no one to thank; did he not provide Daphne with maids, and money for their wages?

Now the table was taking on a queer, disordered look. Sometimes the water in the flower vase was foul; grand-dad had to rise and change the wine glasses. Which brought forth from Olive, "I told her, Professor, but she knew too much about it all to obey"—and Mattie flounced about the table aggressively, as she would not have presumed to do formerly.

The big centerpiece holding a few grapes, and a small dessert plate loaded with late pears brought a rebuke from Dr. Keith: "Why do you not arrange the fruit properly? You toss things on the table anyhow of late."

"I do the best I know how"—sniffed Mattie.

"The best you know how—this? May I ask who served the fruit formerly?"

"Mrs. Keith did"—came back saucily. "She always arranged the fruit, and the flowers, and she always pointed out to me the right dishes and glasses, so I would make no mistake."

The color rose in the doctor's face, and a surprised look came into his eyes, but—"That will

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do, please"—was all he said, and dinner proceeded silently.

Again, in dressing, when a button was missing, a tape broken, a button-hole split, or a half-hose developed a quite unnecessary ventilation, he would drop the damaged article and take a sound one, with the result that a time came when he faced an entire wardrobe of damaged garments, and in sudden anger he started down to the basement, meaning to charge upon the embattled forces. On the way he met the Professor. "Grand-dad," he growled, "are all your clothes a buttonless, holey show like mine?"

"No, sir," answered the Professor promptly. "I'm not short of a tape, nor a button. Haven't been for thirty years. Your mother was the last one to look after me, my boy. When she died, I invested in one black and one white spool of thread, a paper of assorted needles, a box of mixed buttons, and a few feet of tape, and have known a free and independent manhood ever since. I believe, Dr. Philip, I will write a monograph on the needle—its influence on civilization, going back, of course to the bone and bronze imitations and—er—" But the doctor's temper drove him downward, and in a tone fiercely accusative he attacked the maids in a body, and demanded the reason why, with three able-bodied women in his service, he was left

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without one entirely whole and wearable garment in his bureau.

Glances were exchanged, then old Clutterbuck spoke up: "It's not for the cook to mend the clothing, Doctor!"—Mattie pertly announced that mending the washing didn't belong to her. While Lena, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, murmured, "I—I take care of all the children's things, and I suppose I can keep your things also in repair, Dr. Keith, if you ordered me."

"Ordered?" he snapped. "You did not need to be ordered to do your work before—why now, please?"

And Lena answered surprisedly: "Why, sir, it was Mrs. Keith who cared for all laundry, and did the lovely darning on the fine damask covers and napkins."

He turned short about and left them. Then two or three times a week old Clutterbuck waylaid him with withered vegetables, or an undesirable cut of meat charged with the choicest.

"Good God!" he exclaimed at last. "You never tormented me with these things before, why do you do it now?" and could have bitten his tongue for the words, knowing the answer they would bring him—and it came.

"Mrs. Keith—poor dear lady!—always did

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the ordering herself, when out for her early walk." He swallowed his wrath and pain, and asked Clutterbuck to look after the marketing thereafter. And she, proud of a little more authority, promised to bother him no more, but protect his interest to the last penny.

There were ructions almost daily down stairs, and poor old Page, who had become very feeble, had attempted one afternoon to separate Clutterbuck and Mattie, who were making a disgraceful noise. And then, very white and shaken, he had crept upstairs again, into the front hall, where he staggered to his big chair, and fell limply into it, gasping heavily several times for breath. At length the library bell rang—rang a second time—rang again—then violently and long. And after that, amazed and indignant, with eye-brows racing up and down his high old forehead, the Professor appeared, calling loudly, "Page! Page! What does this mean, sir?"—and stopped. For there was Page, who for the first time in thirty years' service calmly remained seated in the presence of his employer—that imperious old employer, who standing before his seated servitor, felt his position correct, since the man in the chair was wrapped in the majesty of death.

Again the heavy floating of crêpe at the door of the old Keith house, crêpe whose darkness

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was intensified by the long black ribbon that tied it, the whole grimly announcing a solemn presence within. Again the little ones went away for an afternoon, and after that the house was even more gloomy, the men more disgruntled, the household machinery worked at more haphazard.

But of all the people in the house, the one who suffered most cruelly, who sorrowed most deeply was little May Keith—for it was the stern command of Dr. Keith that the loving little child should bear no longer the name of that mother who had so humiliated and shamed him in the eyes of men. For the discovery of the unfaithfulness of that proud Daphne, who yet had loved him so ardently, had gone hard with his pride. To be abandoned for Belden, that gilded sepulchre, filled with the dead passions of a lifetime!

The thought made him writhe! Let him forget as quickly as possible, and to that end let him cease to hear the familiar name "Daphne" at every turn during the day. Hence the strict, stern command that left Daphne's little daughter with only the shorn and shrunken name of May to answer to.

And when the doctor had gone, the child with fast falling tears crept close to the Professor, and slipping an arm about his neck, she pressed



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her small wet face against his shoulder, saying, "Great-dad, now there isn't any of my mama left, not any single thing—not even her name! W-what ever I shall do, great-dad?"

In other days much laughter had followed the little girl's peculiar method of questioning: "What you can do, mama?"—"What he could, papa?"—"Where we can go Lena?"—but there was nothing amusing in that helpless, grieving cry, "What I shall do, great-dad?"

And the old gentleman cleared his throat loudly, and raced his eyebrows up and down, and finally abandoned his highly valued second cup of coffee, and holding May by the hand, led her with him into the deepest depths of that lair of his, the library, where the old man and the child, long playmates, were growing into a tender and close companionship, formed on the sympathetic sharing of a great grief.

Poor May!—without her great-dad life indeed would have been hard for her. Young Mr. Keith was too little to be anything more than a tender care, or a plaything. Lena helped her to dress, and sometimes Olive romped a big game of romps with them both, but once tired she sent them off, and grew cross, if they did not go instantly. Papa-doctor hardly noticed her now. She tried herself to teach baby brother, "Now I lay me," but—but the tears

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fell fast at the thought she had to say her own prayers all alone, or take them to great-dad. And oh, Lena turned the light quite out, and switched her skirts out of the room, and left her alone in the dark, and sometimes forgot to leave her a glass of water near the bed, and she was often thirsty, and she lay and thought how mama always came and cuddled her when the light was low, and told her the love of the dear God was all around her. And mama would call her "Heart of mine," and "Mama's true little heart."

Then such an agony of grief would convulse the child that she couldn't bear the black loneliness, and presently a trembling, white-robed little body would be standing in the Professor's room, a small hand laid upon his breast, and a shaking voice would quiver out, "Great-dad, I'se so frightened—please take me, please!"

And the old scholar, with hair on end, looking all ways for Sunday, but with calm, steady brows, reached out his shrunken, long arms, and drew the mother-starving child into their tender shelter, and held her small cold feet close in his warm hands, and kissed her tear-wet face, and "There—there—there'd" her until the rending sobs and gasps were reduced to long, shuddering sighs and when, at last, quite worn out sleep came to the purply-blue

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eyes wrapped in a bed spread and looking like the spook of an Indian brave returning to his tepee in search of war paint, the Professor carried the sleeping child back to her own bed—as, for reasons of health, he would not permit her to share his room over night.

Once she had been in a serious state of excitement about her mother. One person told her she had gone far away; another said she was very sick, and could not get well; while old Clutterbuck said her mama was dead, and had been put in the ground. The idea so terrified the child that she was a mere bunch of quivering nerves. Then the Professor loved and soothed, and comforted her as best he could, and out of his wisdom told her the truth, as he believed it. That her mother was with the God who had created her; that she was still beautiful and happy, and she would see her again in God's good time.

And then in a passion of jealous love, the sensitive child cried out, "How can my mama go away up in Heaven, and be happy without me, whom she did say I was her heart?"

Poor little, love-hungry soul! In simple words he impressed upon her young mind the idea that her mother still loved her much, that her complete happiness depended greatly upon her little daughter's mind and heart, and con-

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duct. And straightway May began to plan new goodness, more love for everybody, so that mama might be happy up in Heaven, and not be "bovered by any naughtiness down here."

And seeing the sweet, strong faith of the child, the aged man bowed his head and prayed: "God—if indeed there be God—if I have erred; if my words are misleading words, visit the punishment upon me, Lord!—not upon this loving, grieving and most innocent child—Amen!"

In all that disturbed household there was but one whose heart beat swift and strong with irrepressible joy; whose throat was full of song; whose mouth bubbled with laughter in the silence of her own room—Olive Marr.

She knew her conduct was atrocious, incredible; that she was ingratitude personified. She, whom Daphne had allowed for years to coil like a chill viper on her warm hearthstone. "Well," she thought, defensively, "I did not really sting!" and an inner voice answered, "True, but you knew your long presence there was ever threatening and repellant." "Yet now—now Daphne was gone!"—and there was new pleasure in all she looked upon. "Daphne was gone!" and her soul sang a song of rapture. "Daphne was gone!"—she was amazed, stupefied at her own brutality, but she felt that because Daphne was gone, that the day dawned



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like a stupendous rose, and closed in immeasurable glory! Knew that this was why she had rejected two offers of marriage in the past! Over there Philip was—in that room, alone, and free—free! That room, at whose door she had often stood at night, listening to the murmur of voices within, until she was half mad with jealous passion! But now he, Philip was free!”

## CHAPTER XII.

### BACK TO LIFE.

Ah, how long she had waited, sulked and suffered; even the endearments she had received had been but torments to her, for she had ever asked herself whether the kiss Philip gave was for Olive, the childish ward, or for Olive, the woman.

Daphne had been right when she declared that the mask of childish affection had worn so thin, that a woman's passion showed plainly through. Women always understood such things. And she had still to wait—but what a different waiting! All hope and joy and security! For she was very shrewd. She had said to herself, "Philip is good to look at; he is far better off financially than he will admit. There are other women he meets, many of them, and novelty appeals to man. Now what handle can I best hold him by, other than love?"

And the answer to her question was, "The children!" Yes, she must make herself necessary to the little ones; that would give her a hold over him; that would spell security for herself. So Daphne gone—Philip free—her waiting was a time of infinite delight.

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Things were not so well with Dr. Keith. Of all the things he dreaded were anything like discredit or disrepute, and he thought he saw low down in his sky a cloud of scandal, no larger than his hand at present, that might spread with the swiftness of a black squall. For there was a question beginning to run about. "Where's Belden?" It ran from one club to another; along Fifth avenue, even up and down Broadway—"Where's Belden?" There were lapses in business appointments; sacred dinner engagements were ignored without excuse or explanation of any kind, and naturally the indignant sufferers asked, "Where's Belden?" Presently the papers would catch the question up, and then what prying, questioning, burrowing! That visit to the art gallery, just before his disappearance, was with the late Mrs. Keith. And oh, after that the deluge of hint, innuendo and open scandal. "Damn Belden!"—he wished he had been in the wreck with the woman he had led astray.

In the midst of his fears he recalled a proposal made to him recently, by the publishers of a prominent medical and scientific journal, that he rejected at the time because he feared that his home practice might go to pieces during his necessary absence. Now, he feared, that smirched by scandal, his presence would prove

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more injurious to that hardly won practice than his absence would. He consulted the Professor, which fact alone indicated how deep was his perturbation, and then sought out the parties interested to inquire whether they had yet given the position to another physician.

They not only had failed to find a man of suitable attainments, experience and literary ability, who was willing to go to the Far East, but they were so rejoiced at his present readiness to serve, that they greatly increased the original honorarium offered. And he straightway signed articles, and bound himself to leave New York as early as possible for Asiatic ports; for the teeming cities of India and China, in search of material for a set of articles anent the origin, growth, spread and treatment of a world terrorizing disease; and to report on the sanitary condition and comparative mortality of various hospitals. His would be a position of trust, and of some slight honor. And he was thankful to be able to escape for a time from his demoralized household—Jones would hold the practice together.

The Professor had many friends in Philadelphia; he could take for a year the house furnished as it stood, of old Dr. Williams, recently deceased; his widow, a charming old lady, retaining but a wing for her own use, and with



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the New York residence closed, gossip would soon die of starvation. In three months all would be forgotten, which would leave a nine months' margin of utter oblivion for his affairs, and without saying it in so many words, he managed to give the impression that he was taking the family abroad with him. And so it came about that his farewells were spoken in an old red, white-stepped, white-shuttered house in one of Philadelphia's charming suburbs. Mattie had been dismissed, but Clutterbuck, the doggedly faithful, and Lena, the mercenary, and "Scissors," the destructive, but beloved, were the camp followers of the small invading army from New York, who helped to take off, for the children, the sharp edge of utter strangeness.

The two men had gripped hands for a long, silent moment. Little Philip said "Dood-by" sturdily, knowing no cause for grief, and waved with spirit a small flag. May, waxen-white, her black-lashed, blue eyes heavy and dull with pain, stood looking on when the doctor openly took Olive Marr in his arms. There had been no words between them, but now as he held her close, he said suddenly, "Until I return, Olive"—and with glowing, swimming eyes upon his face, she whispered, "Till your return, Philip."

He kissed her again, and was running down

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the steps, when little May sprang after him, crying, "Wait Papa—oh, wait! I must—I must!"

"Must what?" he asked, bending down to her.

Her frail arms went about his neck, "I must say good-bye for my mama" and her childish lips were pressed to his with all her small strength.

His startled groan was half anger, half pain, but he returned her kiss and passing her over to the Professor, he sprang into the carriage, flashing one last glance at Olive—who understood and answered it, as he disappeared.

In the kitchen were nods and hints and meaning looks. Upstairs Olive dreamed dreams of delight and triumph. In the den just off the library, May sobbed her little heart out in great-dad's old arms, while in the hall, young Mr. Keith, astride of his great-dad's cane, rode gallantly up and down, waving his flag, and shouting, "Dood-bye! Dood-bye!"—while Lena, hearing him, hoped he might not cry for mother again that night—as it was surely time for him to forget her.

And about the hour Dr. Keith was watching from the great steamer's deck the fading of San Francisco's Golden Gate, in the Canadian city of Montreal a woman was leaving the General

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hospital. Her case had been of peculiar interest to every one, but as patient and woman she had grown to be of paramount importance to crusty, old Dr. McNab, who had made her his protégé and was now escorting her to his own quiet, old-fashioned home on Beaver Hall Terrace, where Miss McNab, his devoted old, maiden sister and tyrannical housekeeper, was waiting to give her welcome. For any living creature that interested her brother "Andy," as did this poor afflicted woman, was bound to be held precious by Mitty McNab.

As they stood outside the hospital building, he knew the woman was still Denise Varide—she had not found herself. At first he had hoped eagerly for her restored identity; now a cold fear clutched at his heart, lest, finding herself, she should pass out of his life, for secretly he knew that this painfully disfigured woman had still the power to charm. Knew that he was under the spell that had not touched him since at eighteen he had kissed the dead face of his wee lassie sweetheart.

And now he was an old man, whose grizzled hair, bushy brows, wiry side-whiskers, and bright eyes made him so ludicrously like a keen terrier, that irreverent students whispered as he passed, "Who said rats?" Well, she was poor and friendless, and until she found herself

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again, his should be the joy of shielding her from the world.

A heavy veil covered her still discolored face. He helped her into the cab, and as they passed through a street they noted a crowd of children, following curiously an old bent woman. As they passed she turned a laughing, toothless, old black face toward them, and mumbled, "Ain't you-uns ever done seed no nigger woman befo'?"

Madam Varide made a quick movement; her hand went to her forehead; she smiled confusedly, then said slowly, stammeringly, "How-dy mammy?"

The old negress bobbed delightedly. "How'dy, honey lady, how'dy?"—she cried back in a quivering voice, and Dr. McNab watching the puzzled face beside him, knew that benumbed memory had faintly moved.

As Miss McNab drew Madam Varide into the old-time drawing room, the doctor glanced quickly at the mirror, but it was safely swathed in white net. While the hostess went in for a glass of sherry, Madam Varide, walking slowly about looking at the engravings on the wall, came suddenly upon a small looking glass framed beautifully in silver.

"What a beautiful piece of repoussé work," she exclaimed. Bending to look at it, she gave

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a shuddering cry, and shrinking back, gasped, "Who is it? Oh, God! Who is it with the awful face?"

Mentally he cursed the carelessness that had overlooked the small mirror. He caught her hand, but she pulled back and looked again at the awful gashes from severed eyebrow to chin, as yet unhealed and hideous. Then slowly turned the other cheek, and recognition leaped into her eyes.

"Daphne," she whispered in an awed voice. Then cried aloud, "Oh, mammy! mammy! you were wrong! The black woman did conjure the white child after all!"—and suddenly her throat began to swell and throb with choking laughter. The doctor rushed out, returning in a moment. "Drink this at once!" he cried, extending a glass holding a milky fluid, but she staggered dizzily and dropped the glass. Catching her before she fell, he lowered her to the sofa, in a long, dead faint.

When she had recovered, he looked long into her eyes. "Well?"—he said. A little color touched her white face, her eyes dropped; she remained silent, and he understood. "She will not lie," he thought, "neither will she confide in me, but she knows she is not Denise Varide—she has found herself."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FIVE YEARS LATER.

A late October morning, five years almost to a day since Dr. Keith, lifting his eyes from Olive Marr's unconscious face, had heard his wife's accusing words, and had seen her rush from his house followed by Stanley Belden, and now the front door of the old Keith mansion was flung open and two children came out. A tall slip of a girl May had become for her age, presenting an appearance of extreme fragility that was belied by her perfect health. Her movements were light and graceful as a fawn's as she sprang down the steps, and there paused, for little Philip's slower descent. The stiff rigidity of his small body betrayed the fact that he wore a plaster jacket. From a fall he had received an injury to the spine, and he might have to remain encased in this plaster-of-paris for a year or more. Hence Dr. Keith's desire to engage a governess, as the child's education could not be neglected, and he was not in a condition to attend a public school.

May unlocked the gate of the private park, and as they went to their favorite bench, she

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said: "I heard mama Olive tell papa again last night that I ought to recommence school, Philip."

"Oh, no—no! Daffy-May, don't go!" cried the boy excitedly.

"S-s-sh!" warned May, "don't call me that—papa will be angry if you do."

"But, I'm afraid to be all alone with the strange teacher, and—and I can't play by my own self, either!" He began to cry, but May, with motherly little hands smoothed the broad collar of his sailor suit, and promised to go and ask great-dad to let her stay at home and have lessons with him, when the strange teacher came.

"Will—will she whip me?" tremulously questioned little Philip, pressing close to the sister, whose love was his sure refuge.

Her face flushed, "No!" she said sharply. "No, indeed, great-dad won't let any one strike you—if he knows." Then, after a pause, "If it wasn't for being a tattle-tale, I'd tell great-dad of—"

"What's a tattle-tale?" demanded the boy.

"Being a coward," answered May.

"Well, girls can be cowards, can't they?"

"No, they can't, any more than boys can. You see, little brother, you must just try to mind straight off, quick." He nodded rather

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dejectedly, and they looked at each other with some secret understanding.

"What's the use," asked Philip, "of the teacher coming to-day, when papa and mama won't be home till to-morrow or next day?"

"Oh, papa told great-dad to keep her or send her away, just as he thought best."

"Oh, I wish," sighed May, "we had 'Scissors' here, she so loves to climb trees to the length of her long chain!"

"I'll go over and get her," offered Philip.

"No, mama Olive was so angry with her she said she should be caged up all the day. Poor 'Scissors!' "

"Our own mama didn't shut 'Scissors' up like that, did she?"

"No, indeed, brother. 'Scissors' loved mama. Clutterbuck says everybody loved her, and that she was the most beautiful lady in the world. Can't you remember her, Philip, if you try very, very hard? Can't you hear her call you her little man-child?"

He puffed out his cheeks and spread his feet apart at the words "man-child," but a moment later had to shake his head. "I do try and try, but I only see a lady in a white dress with a pink bird on her shoulder, an—and I fell down, and caught at her skirt and tore it, and she picked me up and kissed me in the neck, and—"



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"Yes—yes," encouraged May, eagerly.

"And I stopped crying, and laughed, and she laughed, and—"

"Can't you see her sparkly eyes?" broke in May. "Her pretty red mouth—her wavy hair—oh, can't you, Philip?"

"No!" he shook his head. "I can't see her face at all, and I'm so sorry. Are you like her Daffy-May?"

"S-s-sh!" she warned again. "No, I'd like to be! I might help you to remember then. But great-dad says I'm no more like my lovely mama, than a ray of pale winter sunshine is like a ray of June's midday sun. But don't ever forget, little brother, the white dress and the laughing kisses in our neck, for anyway, they were a part of our own dear mother. Let's go closer to the iron fence, so we can watch for the teacher's carriage."

And while they watched in the park, the Professor sat in the library, waiting the coming of Madam Varide, who had been so strongly recommended to him by his old time acquaintance and occasional correspondent, Dr. McNab. He had spoken of her as a woman of generous education, many accomplishments and exquisite breeding. She was the most valued friend of his sister and himself. For five years their home

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had been hers to command. He thought it right to mention that she had been cruelly disfigured, and was in consequence so sensitive to the effect her scarred face might produce upon other people's sensibilities, that she insisted on taking her meals in the schoolroom or nursery with her charges. He admitted he knew naught of her life prior to the five years of his intimate knowledge. Personally he would greatly regret to have her leave Montreal, but for some years her constant desire had been to come to New York and teach, and here was the very opening desired. Oh, yes, she spoke French with rare purity. German? yes, she had a class of young business men the year just gone, whom she had instructed in German. But she craved the companionship of little ones—and so the loyal man put the brake down upon his protesting old heart, and opened a way for the passing from him of the one woman of his world, giving himself no praise for his self sacrifice, since to secure her happiness, he would risk life itself.

No, she had not confided in him, and he had asked her nothing. Her friendship was true and tender, her gratitude immeasurable, and they made the joy of his bleak life. Some day she would trust him, and tell him of her shipwrecked life. He might be able to serve her or he might not, but her trust in him when it came

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would be the crowning honor of a lifetime of honest effort to serve suffering humanity.

And so as Andrew McNab's words had favorably impressed Professor Keith as to the suitability of the slightly eccentric teacher as resident governess for the Keith children, his description to Madam Varide of May and little Philip, let loose a flood of questions, all favorably answered, yet ending in a feverishly excited refusal to accept the offered position.

For the first time, utterly unreasonable to all inquiries, all argument, she answered only, "I dare not! I dare not!" Wholly puzzled, Dr. McNab began to scribble a message of refusal to the Professor, when, it being Saturday, the seamstress, her little girl at her side, entered the sitting room to receive payment for a week's sewing for Miss McNab.

The child was a pretty, blue-eyed, roly-poly little thing, and Madam Varide drew forth a pocket bonbonnière, and poured the small sweets into the little one's eager hands. Then suddenly she caught the little body in her arms, and at the soft warm touch, her entire frame was a-quiver with emotion. Then releasing her, she stood up, trying hard to calm her face and voice, and turning to the doctor, murmured, "Forgive me," she drew from his fingers the



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message he was writing, crushed it and flung it aside, and cried commandingly: "Write doctor—write, say that I accept—say that I start at once—not later than Monday."

She turned, crossed to Miss McNab, kissed her on the cheek, and slipped from the room. At the foot of the stairs she paused; she spoke to herself, "I can bear it no longer! If I am discovered, there's the open door! I can die—but," she clenched her hands, and beat upon her breast. "I must see them—and I will!"

And now, with courage screwed to the sticking place, with every nerve tense and taut, trusting to her changed appearance, and to her augmented powers of self control, through much planning, she believed herself to be able to meet, even to discount any situation, or untoward combination of situations that could possibly arise from her undoing. She had tried, desperately tried, to anticipate every probable, even possible turn of events, and now as the carriage turned into the well remembered old square, Madam Varide gasped heavily, and bowing her face in her hands, lifted up her voice in anguished appeal, "My soul cleaveth to the dust! O, quicken thou me according to thy promise!"—and in a moment more ascended the steps of the Keith house—an old fashioned figure in a gray gown, gray silk gloves, a much

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beaded mantle of nameless form, and a heavily veiled black bonnet.

As she entered the hall she instantly noted the absence of old Page, and could not help counting it as one danger the less. Before the maid could present her card, Professor Keith appeared in the doorway of the library ready to welcome her, and made the excuses of Dr. and Mrs. Keith, who were enjoying a two-day jaunt in the Catskills.

"Ah?" sighed Madam, disappointedly, "you desire me to return another day?"

"No—no, Madam Varide, not at all! My grand-son has given me full authority to act on my own judgment in this matter, since I hold the welfare of our little people quite as much at heart as he does."

"I cannot doubt that, monsieur," she answered, and a little thrill of emphasis in the tone, something more than mere courteous agreement, caught his quick ear.

He looked hard at her. "Madam, you will do me the pleasure of lunching with me presently, will you not?"

To her nervous dread, the invitation sounded like a challenge. Well, she must accept it; only audacity could save her now. And with a touch of prim formality, she answered, "But the pleasure will be mine, monsieur," and made her for-

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eign half curtesy, half bow, knowing perfectly the request that would follow this concession.

"Then madam, pray remove your bonnet and cloak, that we may talk more at ease."

Through her mind flashed the words, *l'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace*. As she slowly raised her veil and untied her bonnet, she heard the quick, startled intake of his breath at the sight of her disfigured face, and knew that, kindly gentleman that he was, his eyes were instantly averted, while he busied himself in drawing forward a big chair for her comfort.

Now she saw how frail he had grown, how stooped his shoulders, how very thin and white his hair, how serpent like the veins on his hands. But his eyes were still piercing, his hearing as sharp as ever. He was at one and the same time her greatest dread and her only hope. If she could successfully pass his examination and scrutiny, she would fear little from the others. While, should he discover her identity, he only, might show her mercy. And so she slowly folded her cloak, and more slowly removed her gloves, giving him time to study her appearance, while her heart seemed choking her with its thick throbbing.

A queer personality, he thought. Thick of waist and choked up about the neck and shoulders, with a small chenille shawl. Long drop



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earrings, and black hair banded down smoothly each side of her face, with a glistening shine that announced the use of some strong, restraining bandeline. She wore an odd half-cap, half head-dress of lace and velvet, something like the head covering favored by German widows. Smoked eyeglasses gave a final touch of oddity to the middle-aged teacher, who desired a position in his home.

He forced himself to look well at the cruel scars, wondering the while how they might affect the children, for they were truly terrible. One great cordlike welt told where the eyebrow and part of the eyelid had been severed. Another gash had passed through the corners of both lips, while a third irregular, ragged wound had pulled and puckered the cheek in front of the ear, so that the whole side of her face seemed dragged downward. Great shadows lay beneath the eyes, whose color was not discernible through the glasses.

Poor thing, he thought—poor thing. A woman might be better dead than like that. Suppose Daphne had lived in such awful disfigurement—beautiful, beautiful Daphne—whose ruined young face was hidden in the grave?

“Madame,” he began suddenly. “my grandson holds a good musical training so all important, that I shall request you first of all to play a little

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for my pleasure and information, and then perhaps you will explain your method of teaching young students."

He led the way to the drawing room, and as Madam Varide approached the instrument, in spite of the quaint old lace and velvet cap, the proud up-lift of the head caught his eye, and though her playing was absolutely without pose or affectation, there was such extraordinary grace of movement in arm and wrist, something so—so almost familiar, that his heart quickened its beating unpleasantly.

She had demonstrated her ability as a pianist, and they were returning to the library, when he asked apropos of nothing, "Can I ever have known you before, madam?"

And she answered calmly, "Only through my most kind friend, Dr. McNab, monsieur."

He ran up a shade to admit more light. "Have you," he hesitated, then with something like embarrassment, continued, "Have you ever been in New York before, madam?"

She had believed herself done with pride, yet here it was making a direct lie hard for her. Then she recalled that time, when she had first found herself again, and drawn by mother love as by a magnet, she had returned to home and children, only to find both town and country houses closed, and the family reported to have



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gone abroad for an indefinite period. Then broken in spirit and body, with her last dollar she had humbly returned to her one friend, Dr. McNab—and she answered, “I have, some years since, you understand, I have spent a long day in your great city. Monsieur must not count it against me, that I have had so long to wait for my opportunity to know it.”

He waved his hand, he did not smile, he was restless, dissatisfied, he knew not why. From sheer force of habit he led her to his own special lair, at the far end of the library. As she passed, she unconsciously swept a cloth cover from the cage, where the great pink bird, with veiled eyes sat sulking silently. Suddenly it smoothed its rumpled feathers, cocked its head to one side, and listened intently.

The Professor had addressed Madam Varide in German. She had promptly answered in the same tongue, and now she stood reading aloud from the old man’s adored Goethe’s epoch-making “Faust.” A gleam of pleasure was dawning in his eyes, when the bird suddenly gave a squawking cry, and began to bob, to clamber all over the cage; to bite the perch, to swing upside down, in an excitement that grew wilder every moment.

Professor Keith rapped sharply on the cage with his knuckles—Madam calmly turned the

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page. But the beauty of measure, the trained and perfect enunciation that made even gut-terals musical were wasted in a struggle against the wild shrieking.

"In God's name, what is the matter with you?" cried the Professor. "In ten years I have never known you to make such a fiendish exhibition of yourself." He leaned over and set the cage door open. "There," he said, "take your freedom, and let us have peace!"

But instead of leaving the cage demurely, as was her wont, the bird burst forth, and with shrieks flew heavily, straight to Madam Varide. She struck on her arm, and then with aid of beak and claws, clambered up to the shoulder, and with a tempest of clucking, kissing sounds, nibbled tenderly at madam's ear. Then lifting every feather on end, bowed and waited the long-lost caress.

Had there been one moment's time for thought the woman could have played her part, and beaten her off with assumed terror—but there was no time, and by the accursed power of habit, she raised her hand and gently rubbed the powdery hot head.

Too late she thought—too late, and she tried to beat the creature off. With joyous clackings of tongue, it bobbed and bowed and caressed her cheek, and with a sudden flapping of its

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wing, struck off the smoked glasses, and sent them to the floor.

One full level glance from the sparkling sapphire blueness of that perfect eye met the old man's starting sight, and with a long wavering cry, he fell backward in his chair, "Daphne"—he gasped.

She held herself in hand, restored the glasses, and said, "Monsieur, what is it?"

But shaking and quivering, he whispered hoarsely, "I saw the rain falling upon your coffin. I saw your coffin lowered to the grave—and yet—yet you are Daphne!"

Stubbornly she repeated. "But monsieur?"

He shook his head. "They never forget, those creatures of the parrot blood, and—and they cannot lie!" Suddenly he reached up and caught at the muffling shawl, and drew it from beneath the ear. "The mole?" he muttered feverishly.

"There is no mole," she answered low.

"No," he replied condemningly. "No mole, but the scar left from its removal! Daphne! Daphne!"

They heard approaching footsteps. "The servants!" she warned, "they must have heard your cry!"

"Lock the door," he gasped.

"No—no! That would set them wondering!"

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She looked about, the books reached near the ceiling—the library steps were close beside her. Swiftly she sprang up and drew down a large book from an upper shelf—laid it face downward upon the floor, then overturned the steps beside it, and as old Clutterbuck and the parlor maid appeared, she was bending over the Professor.

“Is he hurt, ma’am?” asked the cook excitedly.

“Only jarred a little,” answered Madam Varide. “The library steps are uncertain—what you call unsteady.”

“It’s the Lord’s blessing, he isn’t broken like an image!”

The maid picked up the book and the steps and madam suggested a glass of wine, or a little spirits for monsieur. And in a few moments the servants, satisfied, were marking the event by an extra tea drinking. While in the library, behind closed doors, Professor Keith and Daphne—the dead alive—were facing each other.

“What is the meaning of this cruel, this incredible deception?” demanded the old man. “And why have you returned to the home you have dishonored?”

“Pardon, I have dishonored no one, not even myself. I have broken no law, human or divine.

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An outraged wife yielded to a mad impulse of resentment, of repulsion. I have been the helpless plaything of circumstances, but in spite of the black cloud of suspicion that has fallen upon me, I am to-day as pure a woman, as stainless a wife as when I ruled mistress here."

"But," he interrupted, "Belden? He disappeared with you? He loved you?"

"Yes, he loved me after the manner of mankind, with a savage selfishness that made him ready to trample under foot every obstacle between him and the creature of his desire. His action that dreadful day can best be described as abduction."

Then swiftly, steadily, she told the story of her disappearance, of her escape from Belden, the disaster that had left her with broken bones, ruined features and disturbed faculties. Of her restored identity, her frantic effort to find her family, her unbroken silence toward Dr. McNab, her undying longing for her children leading to this mad undertaking.

The Professor bowed his head in his hands, and groaned aloud, but spoke no word, and with sudden heat she went on.

"You cannot doubt my word! I, who never lied to you, in all my life! You—you shall not doubt my word!"

"No," he answered, "I do not doubt your

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word, because I know that truth is often strange to wildness. But you must know that there is but one thing for me to do—to send you from this house as quickly as possible.”

“You mistake”—she stiffened. “The one thing for you to do is to give me this position of governess, and then use your best endeavor to keep me in it!”

“You must be mad—your presence here would disrupt the family!”

She removed the smoke-colored glasses; she pressed her hands firmly down on the backs of his, as they rested on the chair’s arms, and looking steadily in his eyes, said, “Listen—you must understand me better. If you refuse to aid me; if you drive me away from this house—”

“Well?” he murmured.

“Well, no divorce was ever granted—so, I alive, Philip’s marriage is void! That woman is no longer his wife! Ruin, disgrace, destruction comes upon the entire family!”

The Professor shuddered all over, as he frantically protested, “But you will not proclaim yourself? You will not do this awful thing, Daphne?”

“No, I will not do it because—because you will not force me to do it. But I will have sight of my children. I will breathe the air they breathe. Their loving caresses will be for their

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parents as before, but—ah, well, I shall at least know how to win their respect, their affection, perhaps."

As at that instant the children entered the hall, Daphne caught up her glasses, crossed her hands at the waist line, after the manner of the foreign trained, wage-earning woman, and whispered fiercely, "Think quick—mistress or servant? Daphne Keith or Madam Varide—choose!"—then awaited the children's entrance.

As the Professor turned, he saw a portion of the spirits had been left in his glass, and he drained it eagerly, drew his handkerchief across his wet brow, and then held out his hand to May, saying in a tremulous voice, "Here, children, is the good lady who is going to improve your neglected manners, and bring you up-to-date in your lessons, and abreast of other children of your age."

"But," interrupted a tender voice, "we shall not study all the time. We shall have plenty of play, and many games of the newest—shall we not?" and she advanced a trembling hand, which May very prettily took. "My name is Varide, Madam Varide, Miss Daphne-May."

The child started and looked anxiously at her great-dad.

"Yes—er, that is," stammered the old man, "I—er mentioned to madam your baptismal

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name, but may have neglected to inform her that you are addressed only by the second name—May.”

Madam’s face flushed red to her smoothly banded hair, and May hastened to explain.

“I was Daphne-May until my mama went to Heaven—but Daphne was my mother’s name, too, and papa after—”

“Ah, yes, I quite understand, mademoiselle. He loved her so—he desired to forget—”

“Not her name, but the loss”—sharply interrupted the Professor, noting May’s puzzled expression.

Madam then held out her hand to Philip, who, staring with frightened eyes at her scarred face, refused to come. And when May, much mortified, attempted to force him, she had remonstrated quietly, “No—no, he will come presently. Waif a little—let him get over his fright.” Then louder, she asked, did they ever play soldiers, and May laughed, “Yes—often!”

“Good,” said Madam Varide. “Then we can have some real drilling with a gun, and when lessons go well, we will build a fort, a quite for true fort; and run up a flag and salute it at sundown, and sing the ‘Star Spangled Banner!’ ”

An eager little hand had caught at her skirt,



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and small Philip asked, "May I play in the fort, too, please?"

"Why, yes," the strange teacher answered. "You will be the only real soldier, since you are a boy"—and when again she put out her hand, little Philip shyly put his small fist into it.

At that touch, Madam's face began to tremble, to twitch violently. She bowed her head lower and lower, trying to regain her self control.

Tender-hearted May pressed closer to her. "You like little boys, don't you, madame?" she asked happily.

"Yes—yes, I had one once of my own," she explained—then paused.

And May leaned toward her and touched her cheeks with her lips.

A deadly faintness began to assail her, when the observant Professor exclaimed, "Madam is much fatigued from night travel. Get her a glass of water, May."

And as the child obeyed, madam arose, donned her bonnet and wrap, and said in firm, cold tones, as she laid a packet of letters upon the table, "Here are some further credentials, monsieur, you may wish to look over. Your terms will satisfy me entirely—so, shall I return to-morrow morning, ready to enter upon my duties as governess—or shall I not?"

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A dead silence followed, while the stranger and great-dad looked at each other; the children drew closer together and waited.

The old gentleman passed his tongue over his dry lips twice—then he said faintly, "We will expect you to-morrow, madame."

She turned to the children, making her combination curtsey and bow, while murmuring, "Miss May—Master Philip"—then to the Professor, "Until to-morrow at ten—au revoir, monsieur"—and passed out, herself opening and closing the hall door.

While Professor Keith repeated to himself, helplessly: "*Pactum illicitum—pactum illicitum.*"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE GOVERNESS ESTABLISHED.

By chance, for her own use, Madam Varide had been given the room formerly occupied by Olive Marr, and a rear chamber had been arranged for a schoolroom. And when in October, Dr. and Mrs. Keith had returned from their brief trip to the mountains, they had found Madam Varide two days established, the program of alternating studies and pleasures complete, and lessons already begun.

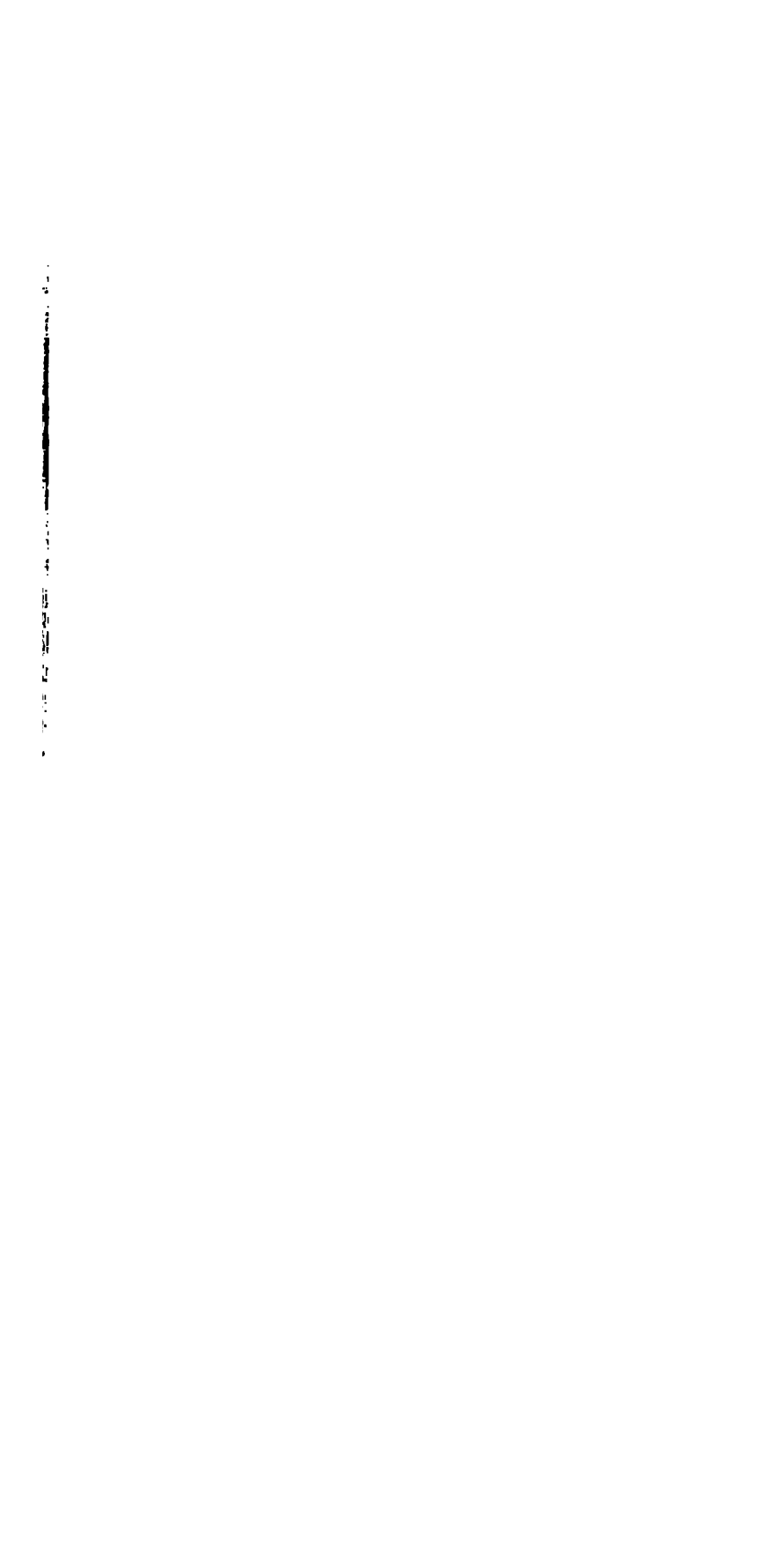
Olive Keith had given her somewhat patronizing welcome, after an ill-bred demonstration of shocked sympathy at her disfigurement.

The doctor had been so overoccupied in his efforts to catch up with his neglected work, that two or three days passed before he had personally met face to face the children's governess. Then he came upon her in a rather dark hall as she was passing from the schoolroom. He halted one step from the top of the stairs, as he saw the weirdly old-fashioned figure. Extending his hand in greeting, he lifted his eyes to her face, and straightway all the doctor in him rushed to the fore; he saw only with pro-



“ The programme of alternating studies and pleasures  
complete and lessons already begun.”

*Chap. XIV.*



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fessional eyes, yielding unqualified admiration to the surgical *tour de force* before him. "By Jove!" he thought, "the man who stitched those gashes, that severed brow and lid, yet saved the eye's sight was a mighty surgeon before the Lord!"—and from that time, the teacher of his children interested him only as a wonderful surgical exhibit.

The old man Keith had looked forward with dread to that first meeting, and when it was over he said: "I cannot eat—I cannot sleep, for dread of an explosion!"

And Madam had entreated, "Do not distress yourself, sir. You have no need. If discovery comes, I shall never betray your complicity—never! It is my life that has become one long nightmare of dread, lest I lose the joy of seeing my darlings; the bliss of touching their thrice-blessed young bodies; the pride of opening their young minds and arousing an intelligent curiosity about the world, and about men and things. Therefore be calm, Professor, I only ask your silence now."

"But—but," he stammered anxiously. "I discovered yesterday a weak spot in your armor."

"A-ah?" she ejaculated.

"Yes, your hands. They are very beautiful, and they are ten years younger than your face and figure. Mrs. Keith is observant, and very

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quick at putting two and two together. Then, too, pardon me, I think she expected to find in you a sort of fawning, confidential gossip, and your grave reserve has displeased her so much, she will be on the alert to find cause of complaint against you."

Madam looked gravely at her hands—she seemed to ignore all else that had been referred to. "It was good of you to warn me, Professor, I shall profit by your keenness"—and from that time forth she added another weird touch to her costume, in the shape of a pair of thick, black lace mits.

In the schoolroom certain books of ancient lore, hobnobbed with spellers and readers, grammars and geographies, Hans Andersen's and Lewis Carroll's. For just as a murderer is often irresistibly drawn to the place of crime, so the Professor, by his guilty knowledge, seemed to be drawn to the danger zone—the schoolroom. And he often sat aside, close up to the window, reading his Greek or Latin, or pretending to read, while the children were studying or reciting. And always when Madam Varide gave May her music lesson downstairs, he sat with the little lad, Philip, helping him along the somewhat thorny path of learning.

It was surprising to see how quickly madam had won the children's liking, for, truth to tell, she worked them hard, but she was such a de-

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lightful playmate, devised such splendid games. They played nearly everything they studied, as when they drew a map of Australia in the wide soft path of the park, madam was ready to be the native black bushman overpowered by the English settlers. She was also ever ready to be a defeated army or a condemned spy, or a treacherous Indian—leaving all the fine heroic parts for May and Philip.

All this greatly annoyed the ever jealous Olive, who had planned things differently, believing that the children detesting a teacher, would turn naturally to her for their pleasures, treats and games, thus giving her the chance to pose before Philip as the beloved of his children. So there was an estranged and unfriendly eye ever fixed upon the mistress of the schoolroom, who she felt was far too much to her pupils, but whom she had not yet been able to charge with presumption, since she maintained toward the older members of the family a faint touch of that deferential humility of manner peculiar to the woman in service.

That the improvement in the children's manners had been commented upon by Dr. Keith, caused Olive great offence. "I'm sure," she had exclaimed vexedly, "I have always allowed the children at table with us all."

And the doctor had rather ungallantly answered, "Perhaps that is why they have



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improved so much upstairs, under the French madam's training."

But quite the most remarkable change was to be seen in young Mr. Keith. He had fallen for some reason into a hang-dog, timorous attitude, like a child growing cowardly from dread of a blow. "Had you not noticed it Granddad?"

Olive Keith's face blazed red, and the old gentleman hurriedly answered: "Oh, yes, he's got quite all over that now. Only yesterday, fierce as new milk, he threw himself between May and Madam Varide, and the danger of a six-pound dog, who barked most savagely at them."

The doctor threw back his head and laughed delightedly, while the Professor continued: "He is just about crazy to get off that plaster jacket now, because madame has promised that if he stands a good spring examination in those mighty studies of his, and that as soon as he is free of the restraining jacket she will give him first instructions in boxing."

"Oh, what a horrible thing for a woman to do!" cried Olive. But she had played the wrong card, for the doctor, beating the table called delightedly: "Good; good for the old girl—who knows her business! She's not training a coward in her schoolroom!"

And just as the Professor began to take hope and courage, and allowed himself to examine once more his precious old manuscripts, some-

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thing happened that set every nerve in his body athrill with terror.

Madam Varide had from the first taken charge of her own room, declaring she needed the exercise, and was rather exacting as to ventilation, etc. The parlor maid waited at table in the schoolroom, while the waitress attended on the family table. Thus the governess rarely came in personal contact with any other servant.

On the two or three occasions, when she had perforce spoken to old Louise Clutterbuck, that ancient serving-woman had stared so confusedly, listened so intently to her voice, seeming all the time in such a mental maze, that madam felt discretion to be the better part of valor, and had avoided further speech with the old cook, who had faithfully served her from bridehood days to the last one of wrack and ruin, and headlong flight.

All one day an icy rain had fallen, and the half-holiday had been spent in the schoolroom, and the old-fashioned house being generously furnished forth with real fireplaces, that had never been dishonored by the presence of the hypocritical gas-log, there was still a red glow of hot coals in the grate, in front of which sat Madam Varide toasting on a long knitting needle a last bit of marshmallow for Philip's greedy, small mouth—when Professor should have ended the tale of olden time he was telling,

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while the boy leaned against his knee, and May strung beads at the window.

A gale of laughter, escaping from the partly open door, reached to the ears of Dr. Keith, who was on his way to his room to change wet garments for dry ones, and he paused, and looked in. 'Twas as madam held the toasted morsel high, out of his reach, demanding first of the lad how much he could remember of the Professor's story.

"Oh, I remember all!" he cried, fairly jumping up and down from eagerness.

"I remember the pretty queen, fighting lady, with all the armies—"

"And the great engraved emeralds, and peacock fans, and Nubian girls waving them"—added May.

"And," suggested madam, "their great engine of attack, what was that called?"

Philip looked troubled. "May?" he fretted, "what is that word? Hurry, please!" "Was it a catapult?" she answered.

"Yes—yes, that was it!" he cried triumphantly, "a thing I suppose they threw cats with!"

Amid shouts of laughter, Granddad himself gurgling and chuckling, he commanded, "Give him the sweet morsel—he has fairly won it!"

And the unseen watcher at the door, muttered, "By Jove! this is the pleasantest spot in

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the house! If I wasn't so infernally damp, I'd slip in and share the fun. 'A thing they threw cats with'—mighty effective ammunition. Good Lord! hear the old man. He'll choke if he goes on like that!"—and he passed on to his own room.

May looking down into the yard, exclaimed: "Just see old Clutterbuck—"

"Who?" asked madame.

"Oh, please excuse me, I forgot how old she is. But Mrs. Clutterbuck is down in all the cold and wet, without one thing on her head or shoulders. Oh, won't she have a toothache, or neuralgia or something!"

"That pig-headed old creature simply will not believe that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure," growled the Professor, as he thumped the window to attract the woman's attention; shaking his fist furiously at her, then clapped his hand to his jaw, and stamped his stiff old legs in imaginary pain, while the children swayed in helpless laughter.

"Come now," said the governess, "we have just time for one hunt or a drill, and then we must get things in order for dinner."

May, with head on one side, said earnestly: "What a lovely alligator great-dad would be, if he'd lay under the sofa and snap at us."

Madam turned her face aside suddenly, while with an expression of unspeakable disgust, the

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old gentleman finally made answer. "Wouldn't you like me to play the great serpent in Eden for a change?"

And May, whose sense of humor was conspicuous by its absence answered joyfully: "Oh, if you can wiggle great-dad, do be the snake! Philip and I can be Adam and Eve, and madam can be the tree of knowledge!"

The old man flashed a piercing glance at the woman opposite, but he saw no red-stained face, no shamed, downcast eyes; only an unconscious calm, and clear eyes of tender amusement—and like lightning the thought flashed through his mind, "She has committed follies, perhaps, but she has not sinned. I would believe her bare word against the sworn testimony of a world!"

Meanwhile the doctor had found Olive in a state of nervous irritation, and damp and cold as he ransacked the bureau for fresh garments, she exclaimed: "Philip, don't you think it is time for you to exert a little authority in this house?"

"I don't know why," he answered, indifferently. "I have supposed that you ruled supreme here, and ordered your household after the manner of other housekeepers, without calling on a husband for assistance."

"But this creature that—"

"What creature? There are four women in

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service here, if you mean among them, and each one possesses a name of her own."

"You know very well I refer to the governess. She claims entirely too much authority over our children. She grows too pressing, too dogmatic, too magisterial. Why, she has actually challenged my right to their obedience!"

He looked at her with a quizzical expression. "Olive, you can give a very clever twist to a sentence. How much better that 'right to their obedience' sounds than 'my right to their ununiformed regular services as messengers, at any hour, and lessens go hang?'"

"How dares she," angrily retorted Olive, "How dares she slyly complain against me in my own house? And, how dare you listen to her?"

"She made no complaint. She simply wrote a note, asking my orders. You will be surprised to know that you called the children from the schoolroom and lessons four times in six days—to run errands or carry messages. They are so far behind other children of their age in regular school book lore, that she briefly and respectfully asked me to adjust the matter—which I do now by asking you not to interfere with the rules of the schoolroom, as laid down by Madame Varide; a most respectable, dignified and well-informed lady."

He came over and pinched his wife's sullen underlip: "Don't get the cat on your back," he

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teased, "I'll put a boy in buttons on the door, and he can act as your special messenger. And, by the way, stir up some one to clean the brasses out in front; they positively make the house look dingy. Good heaven, will you listen to that rain! I'll go down and chum a bit with granddad, till dinner is ready."

"If he can leave so long the woman with the double face, who so charms him."

The doctor turned, looked steadily at her an instant: "By Jove! for pure unadulterated venom, commend me to a jealous woman!"

"Jealous?" almost screamed Olive, "Jealous? Good God—of whom? Of that—that," but words failed her, and Philip's laugh floated up to her, as he descended.

She clutched her hands, saying: "She shall not stay here—she shall not! She has already won the children away from me, and now, in spite of her hideous face, she is trying to undermine me with Philip! I must get closer to her; talk to her; flatter her by my confidences! The idea of a mere servant holding herself stiffly aloof from her employer. I've tried to surprise her at dressing time, in her own room, but she always keeps the door locked, which proves her secretive, and no honest woman has anything to hide. If only I could make her talk as she sews. She shall teach me the Kensington stitches, drawn work, or what not, and through our talk

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I'll find the fulcrum that will move her out of my world."

That night Madam Varide listened long at the communicating door between her room and that of the children. Unknown to any servant, she had placed the key on her side, and so all the days of work, nervous strain and sickening dread were gloriously crowned at night by the passionate delight of a soft-footed, stolen visit to the young sleepers in the twin beds, standing side by side. The dear delight of smoothing the coverings, the rapture of touching little hands and brows, of kneeling and feeling their clean, sweet breathing against her cheek, while she prayed for God's grace, to keep them sweet and strong, to love His word and do His will.

But this night a slight feverish cold, and great excitement over a promised gift of sword and military cap and sash, for the coming week, had so stimulated the imagination of the impressionable Philip, that he could not sleep till long after his usual hour, and much coughing, many drinks, and two rather drowsy stories from May.

And then at last when she had ventured in, and just able to press between the beds, had stretched an arm across the little bed, she laid her hand, fair and straight upon the doctor's. For a moment it seemed that she must die of terror. Her eyeglasses were off, her hair was loose—nothing could save her if he made a



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light. Presently she heard him saying very low, "Did his coughing disturb you?"

"I was not disturbed, no—but a little anxious lest he should be oppressed in the breathing, or—or a little feverish, and so throw off the covering—if you will pardon my taking the liberty, *monsieur le docteur*?"—she whispered.

"Quite right," he answered, "and thank you for your solicitude, madame. But go and take your rest now—there is no cause for anxiety"—and she had slipped back to her own room, and without a single thought of her unlocked door, had fallen limply into a chair, extended her arms upon the table, and dropped her head upon them. Long, long she lay there, first in a stupor of terror, then measuring the narrowness of her escape, while the danger she had run heavily emphasized the value of her endangered position here beside her darlings.

Once she thought she heard a board creak in the hall, and listened: "Nerves," she whispered, and began to wonder if she had locked her own door as usual. She even fancied she heard a faint tapping. She lifted her head at last. She wore over her nightdress a loose, thick robe-de-chambre. The smooth and shining false front of gray threaded black hair, which she daily wore gummed far forward down temple and cheek, was off, as well as the smoke-colored glasses. Her glory of half curling, deep waved

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hair was swept back from her beautiful temples; the unscarred cheek was turned toward the door—as for that moment she sat tensely listening.

Then—great Heaven!—the door began to move, cautiously, steadily—it opened, revealing Clutterbuck, with bandaged face, and a red petticoat, shawl-wise about her night-gowned shoulders.

“Mrs. Varide, ma’am,” she whispered hoarsely. “Have you any toothache drops, or”—she stopped—she gazed at that immovable figure, that mass of hair, that unforgotten face, those sapphire eyes—gazed, and was mute. Then suddenly gave forth a piercing scream that might have roused the dead.

“A ghost! a ghost! Oh, holy mother, save me from the ghost!”—and thrusting out her arm defensively, she shrunk nearer to the door.

“For God’s sake, silence,” pleaded Daphne. “Clutterbuck! Louise! You used to love me once!”

“The mistress’s ghost!” the woman gasped.

“Clutterbuck, touch me—feel my hands. There, am I not alive?” She heard doors opening. “Oh, for God’s sake! For the children’s sake, be silent!”

She caught up the false front, tied it swiftly in place, twisted her spreading locks into a knot, and thrust one pin through it, then unable to arrange her head-dress, she flung a small shawl

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over head, the point falling on her forehead, the corners brought about her still perfect throat.

Dr. Keith was the first one on the threshold: "What's the matter? Who gave that scream? What are you doing here, Clutterbuck?"

The woman was ghastly; her eyes were terrified. In an agony of fear, madame stooped down and took her hand; she pressed it gently, and spoke for her.

"She has of the toothache, the greatest suffering"—then as the Professor appeared on the scene, madame addressed him: "Ah, *monsieur*, you were the prophet to-day, when you said Mrs. Clutterbuck would suffer from the unwise exposure to the rain."

The doctor raised the woman to a chair. "This is not all toothache," he remarked, "She had a shock. What was she screaming at?"

"That was of the imagination," answered madame, apologetically. "She saw—that is, she thought she saw something in the moonlight, that—"

"I saw a ghost truly, doctor"—gasped Clutterbuck. "Oh, God, be good to all in this house!"

"Whose ghost?" asked Olive Keith.

But the old woman looked sullenly at her: "A ghost's a ghost, never mind the name."

"Grand-dad," said the doctor, "send those women up to their rooms again. See here,

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Clutterbuck, you've been putting too much brandy in the sauces and pies—that's where your ghost comes from. But what brought you here to this room, if you were sick?"

"I went to your room, sir, but all was black and quiet, and seeing a light under Mrs. Varide's door, I thought I would ask her for some drops, or something, and not disturb you, sir."

"Oh, all right! Wait here while I run downstairs for something to ease that pain."

As he left the room, Olive entering, gave a little start. Madame's long hair was slipping down beneath the head shawl. Her bright eyes grew piercing. Madame felt her mocking gaze, and wondered if another weak spot had been found in her make-up—she was on thorns.

Then Mrs. Keith spoke: "You are very original in the treatment of your hair, madame. Worn so straight in front, so beautifully curled in the back. Most women reverse the order."

"A-ah?" interrogated madam, "you have the interest always in the small matters. It is a youthful quality. It would surely not add to the dignity of a middle-aged teacher of children to wear the curls like a mademoiselle. This 'bandeline,' " taking up a wide-mouth bottle from the bureau, "that holds the hair so straight, it costs—*mais*, it costs much. To use it on all the hair would beggar me. Does Madam Keith

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take further interest in the subject?"—the governess's subservient, respectful attitude contradicting the sarcastic words.

"Olive!—Oh, Olive!" called the doctor, "come down here and help me a moment!"—and with flushing face and snapping eyes, she left the room, and descended the stairs, passing the Professor, who was nervously walking the hall.

For the moment, the two women were alone. "Thank you," whispered Daphne. "Oh, thank you for your silence, Clutterbuck!"

That honest creature rocked back and forth distressedly, and groaned. "Why are you here in these duds? Puttin' yourself on a footin' with servants? Is it because of your spoiled face? Why all the body of yer is as lovely as a marble figure. And your hair is a crown of glory. Put on your own clothes and claim your rights! And turn down that treacherous young cat that tried for yer place long before yer left it!"

"No, Clutterbuck, you do not understand. I do not mean to trouble anyone, if I am left alone. Only Louise, I could not live without the sight of my children. I was almost mad with longing, before this chance came to me!"

A new thought had come to Clutterbuck, that brought a scowl to her face.

"A-and what 'come-by-chance,' was it that I

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folled to the grave, m'am, or was it an empty box I shed my tears on?"

"No, Clutterbuck, do not grudge the tears you shed. You followed to the grave a good and worthy woman, who had found the world beautiful but very hard and cruel. God rest her soul!"

"Amen," answered the serving-woman, and stopped speaking at Daphne's gesture of warning, at an approaching step.

'Twas the doctor with a poultice in one hand, and a calming draught in the other. "Come, old lady, get back to your room. And after you take this night-cap, we'll clap on this poultice—it is own sister to the one that half-cooked you a month ago. And you go easy on the cooking brandy, or you'll be seeing worse things than ghosts. Livelier things and more of them! Good night, Madame Varide, I hope this time you may get a chance to rest."

The two out of the room, Madame locked the door, and as she faced about, she saw the opposite door was ajar. With wildly beating heart, she approached, and in the aperture, holding hard to the door knob stood little May; her small face gleaming white from the dark clouding hair, her blue eyes wide and wild.

"My God—for how long?" agonized the woman, as she opened her arms to the silent figure, that sprang to her, wrapping slender

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arms about her neck, while all the slim body shook aspen-like.

And seeing the light in the wide eyes growing brighter and ever brighter, the woman asked herself, "Is this fright, or—or rapture?"

She asked no question; only led the child back to her bed, and knelt, caressing her to calmness and to sleep.

Then at last, in her own room, as she laid her weary head upon the pillow, she asked again, "How long, my God, how long had she been standing there?"

## CHAPTER XV.

### A LOST PARADISE.

One morning the air was so balmy, the sunshine so tempting, so spring-like, the governess had left May, little Phil, and "Scissors" to enjoy an extra fifteen minutes in the park, while she returned to make preparatory arrangements in the schoolroom.

She smiled a bit contemptuously as she glanced up at the old Keith house, without window boxes, with curtains awry and shades at various levels, brasses dull and bits of straw and paper left littering in the small grass-plot—"A house, like a looking glass, reflects its mistress"—she murmured.

She ascended the stairs, Professor Keith following her. As she began to lay out the copy books, pencils, pens and ink, she remarked, "You did not then go to Boston to see the wonderful intaglio at the museum? When you drove away yesterday, I fancied your longing had conquered all resistance."

"Ah, yes—you mean 'The Triumph of Augustus at Actium'—it must be wonderful. It may be that it dates from the third century before Christ, and it's—but there, my errand was a dif-



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ferent one, and I have a word to say to you about it while we are alone." He came closer, and lowered his voice. "I went to my lawyer's, and made a new will. It is very simple and clear, my dear. All I own, all I may die possessed of, is to be divided into three equal parts. One to May, one to young Mr. Keith, and one to you. Not a word, please! My grandson has means of his own and a fine profession, but you—the thought of passing away and leaving you unprovided for is unendurable. The lawyer has made it all safe and secure—thank God!"

She took his thin old hand between her delicate ones: "You are a great-hearted old gentleman, and rarely kind to me. I thank you, sir, but I feel, I am somehow convinced that I shall pass before you into that ever open-door."

"Good Heaven!" he exclaimed, "think of my years, child!"

She shook her head. "That is no argument. How often do we see young athletes followed to the grave by mourners bending 'neath the weight of years. It is not a question of years, but where one has long amused the Fates, one grows somehow to dimly understand. My beauty invited destruction; my pride invited humiliation, and now my longing to serve my children, invites early death. You will see me depart first, sir. Oh, by the way, have you noticed any change—?"

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"In May?" interrupted the Professor. "Yes, indeed, I have. She seems absent-minded, wrapped, absorbed, exalted mentally? What does it mean; is she neglecting lessons?"

"On the contrary, she studies harder than ever—but she neglects her romps and plays to dream and—"

"And worship you, dear madame! She loved you from the first, but now her manner is idolatry. Yet I am unable to trace the change to any particular date or special occurrence."

But Madame Varide's memory flew to that night, when Clutterbuck had recognized and called her mistress; and that little figure had been standing at the open door—how long—oh, how long? What had she heard, and why was she so silent?

She was recalled by the Professor's voice; he was saying anxiously: "Be very careful, madame, Olive is growing daily more suspicious."

"No," she answered soothingly. "Jealous—not suspicious. That matter of the hair was only a vulgar curiosity; a small impertinence."

"But her temper?"

"Ah, yes, that grows intolerable! The hour of sewing with her is a time of penance. She questions me with impertinent insistence, trying to probe my heart, soul and mind. Again she will discuss private affairs, and make revelations

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that other women are decently silent about. Sometimes I suffer cruelly, but I have so far kept my self control, in face of all her 'baiting.' "

"But will you always be able to do that? She has grown of late so irritable, so nervous; she is at variance with the servants, she has become sharp and short, and very overbearing with the children, and often sends May from the room with tear-filled eyes."

Madame's hands flew to her breast, and clenched themselves there hard and tight.

The Professor continued: "Olive's temper was always hot and quick, but soon over. Now, it is not only a word and a blow, but the blow first. And she nurses her wrath for long after. For such a change there is a cause. It is either a growing suspicion of you, or"—he flashed a quick, anxious glance at her—"or it is some woman's reason, physical, perhaps?"

The red blood flooded madame's white face. She caught at a chairback. For a moment there was a mighty rushing in her ears, a swelling rage possessed her. She understood now, and she suffered intensely. She had been right, when long ago she had said to Stanley Belden, "I think I have exhausted my power of loving." To Philip she had given so utterly, so recklessly her all of tenderness, of warm young passion, that when he first wounded and shamed her, as she believed, degraded her love, the passion died

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forever; so that the sight of her husband grown somewhat heavier, with coarsened lines, and a touch of sensualism about his lower face, her jealousy had been more for her lost dignity, than for the faithless husband.

But now she was maternity personified. The passion of mother love shook her very soul. For her children she could have faced the loaded cannon's mouth, without the quiver of an eyelid. Her children—those creatures of her own flesh and blood, for whom she had faced death and madness; to serve or save whom she would give her life, not willingly only, but with triumphant joy! And now in one flash of jealous dread, she saw Daphne-May and little Philip thrust aside, neglected and forgotten. For well she knew that the babe, the newly born, is king in any household, and a second wife's child is perhaps, unconsciously, trained to tyranny, to usurpation. And for the first time, Daphne furiously hated Olive!

The Professor's hand was on her shoulder. "Be wise," he pleaded, "retire while all is safe. I can keep you informed of the little ones' health, and—"

"No—no! and again, NO! I am the only legal wife here. If there is any retiring to be done, let the interloper below do it!"

"Ss-sh!—the children, madame!"

Then as they appeared, "So, Professor Keith,

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you say that the drains are so very bad, that we shall have to remove early to that place of the old name, those Highlands, for the health of all. Ah, ah! Master Philip, you made no little bow to the Professor? Why not? Is it because he is not a stranger, that you neglect to be courteous?"

"No, madam, but 'Scissors' fights so hard to get to you, and mamma has been cross to her for kissing you—and she asked about it, and I forgot my bow. Dady-May knows I just forgot it."

Now every time the child used that forbidden name, madame kissed him tenderly. She did so now, and took the pink-breasted bird from him, whereupon the little lad made his bow to his great-dad, who promptly returned it.

May seated herself at the table, and opened her copy book. Madame saw that her hand trembled.

"Monsieur, will you of your grace, kindly permit that 'Scissors' descends with you to the perch or cage? Here is a bit of the wood that kindles, she will make great joy with that, and not scream."

The old man, with the bird, retired, but his face was greatly troubled.

"What is the matter, mademoiselle, the joy is all gone from your face?"

After a little hesitation, the child answered:

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"Mamma—mamma, Olive is quite—quite vexed with me." She felt the tremble that passed through madame's body.

"Vexed with you, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, madame; because of the little blue ring you gave me. She was very cruel. But you see, I—I have kept it, and would not take it off. And she said, madame, that you should come right down to her at once."

"Indeed—well, first we will do a little work. Your hands are unsteady, so we will not write just now, we will go over our French verbs—while Master Philip prepares for his recitation."

Presently a maid came to say: "Mrs. Keith wishes to see madame."

"Very well. At recess I shall be at Mrs. Keith's command; and will bring the sewing"—was the calm answer returned.

The children had finally descended before Madam Varide, and were standing in the dining room, exclaiming delightedly over a vase of flowers. Madame, as she descended, heard Olive say crossly: "Don't you touch those flowers, either of you!" But as neither had probably heard, there was no answer made.

"Madame," began Mrs. Keith, "I sent twice for you; unless that stupid May forgot as usual my message."

"I have never noted any suggestion of stu-

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pidity in my pupil. She gave me your message directly she saw me."

"Well, you certainly did not disturb yourself to obey my call."

"I saw little difference between calling away the teacher or pupil. Lessons must be first attended to—that was understood, I believed."

"But it was not understood that a mere employe should presume to offer expensive gifts to her pupils."

"Expensive?—*mais non*, madame! A few small playthings. I am alone. I rob no one; when I make play gayer with the aid of a sword or cap."

"And that ring? Is that a fit gift from a teacher? Only a mother has the right to offer such a gift."

"But if the mother shows no eagerness to act upon her right, the teacher might be excused, I think, for rewarding a hard-working young scholar with a birthday remembrance. But I accept madam's reprimand, and will offend with no more gifts, and will try not to forget again the distance between us."

At that moment Philip advanced, holding the vase carefully between both hands, while May gaily followed, saying, "Yes, let us put them in the strong sunlight, so that we may see the colors."

Olive turned angrily: "Didn't I tell you not

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to dare touch that vase?" The child's hands began to shake. "If you spill water on the carpet, I'll—Oh, you clumsy little lunk!"—and with a free swing of the arm, she struck the boy with her open hand across the cheek and ear. So heavy a blow that he lost his balance, and was saved from a possibly dangerous fall by madame's swift clutch at him.

Olive, replacing the vase, did not see the first passionate kisses the governess pressed upon the frightened lad's face. Swiftly she examined him, then tenderly warned him not to cry out like a little dog that had been hurt, but to be quiet and brave like a small gentleman and soldier.

"To strike a child so young is bad," said madam in cold, even tones. "To strike a child of the dead is worse! But to strike a frail little body, helplessly encased in plaster is—is an infamy!"

"I—I had forgotten—but fortunately he is unhurt."

"He carries your hand in red upon his tender flesh. It may be blue presently; and such a blow has caused grave injury before now, to that sensitive bit of mechanism, the ear."

She turned swiftly toward May: "Run, dear, and bring down the old nursery outfit—" She stopped; she had blundered.

Olive leaned forward, blurting out: "What



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do you mean? How can you know anything of the nursery outfit?"

Madame opened her dry lips, but before a sound came forth, May—tender, sensitive, loving May, bravely lied her lie.

"I told Madame Varide all about the old nursery outfit, and how mama used to keep the conservatory and window boxes all full of flowers, and—er of Tummy's tassels—and, oh, lots of things!" The child's face blazed scarlet, but Olive was too angry to notice it.

"You told her all these things? I thought you never spoke of your mother before strangers?"

"Strangers?" May repeated. She turned rapturous blue eyes upon the governess.

"She is not a stranger, she is our—teacher."

Olive felt herself balked, but certainly not satisfied. "Leave the room"—she said, sharply, "both of you!"

The children started—hesitated, then turned inquiring eyes upon the governess, who smiled tenderly upon them, as she nodded acquiescence—and they immediately retired, hand in hand.

Olive fairly quivered with anger. "Madame!" she cried, "your attitude toward the children is inexcusable! It is not to be borne!" Then, with a sneer, that was meant to insult, added, "Considering your position here, I find you entirely too free!"

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Madame's head went up. "I—I am too free with my own ch—, my own pupils? Pardon me, I do not think I deserve that reproach!"

"Yet at this very moment, you presumed to interfere between them and their mother."

"Their mother?" cried the governess in a tone of menace.

To which Olive furiously responded, "I believe no one can dispute my claim to that title?"

Madam, holding desperately to self control, made a last show of humility. "No," she answered. "No one can. But my head, it is distressed. It is best that I retire—I suffer."

"And do you think I do not suffer? You have become my torment, and my bane! Your influence is everywhere! Why do you remain here?"

"Why should I not—even I must live? I harm no one."

"Harm—you have harmed me! Before you came here all was peace and joy. Now you charm away from me every one whom I love!"

Madame smiled grimly, and drew her mitted hand across her scarred cheek.

"Ah, that's what frightens me most; that in spite of your awful face you have won the children. The old Professor, with all his crankiness, is as your shadow, and you are reaching out now for Philip! You are undermining me with him!"—so she went on between tears and rage.

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"Ah-ah!" slowly drawled the teacher. "You find a painful difference between winning another woman's husband, and have another woman try to win yours?"

"Oh—oh!" cried Olive, beating her hands together. "You will not claim that the child told you that? How do you know anything of my past? How do you know dozens of things that you have let fall? The rest are deaf and blind—but I am not!" She caught Madame Varide violently by the wrist, and shook her. "Who are you? Who are you? I will know!"

And breathing short and quick, madam answered huskily, "I am—a woman who has suffered!"

"Ah, but that is not enough—every woman suffers. But you—there is something strange and uncanny about you. You hold my thoughts. I listen—listen to your voice. Every movement of your body is familiar. At the piano lessons I watch until almost I know; until my lips part to call the name—and it is gone! Even in the darkness of the hall I feel your presence, and always you lead me back to the past, and to the thought of that woman!"

"That woman—what woman?"

"She who, covered with sin and shame, left this house forever!"

"A pure woman left this house—the shameless one remained in it!"

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"I knew it!" almost shrieked Olive Keith. "You have known her—you were her friend—perhaps with her when she died. Perhaps for love of her you sought out her children. Well, you find them happy and beloved, so now you can leave them!"

"Not so happy and beloved as to escape blows from their mother's successor. Blows to a child means cowardice—cowardice means lies—lies and cowardice mean a ruined manhood! You have much to answer for to that dead mother! I wonder you are not afraid lest she might rise from the grave to haunt you!"

"She would not dare, even as a spirit, she would not dare to enter here—into the home she had disgraced!"

"You miserable coward!" retorted madame, her rage unleashed. "You dare assail the helpless dead! Oh, you are vile! You walking treachery! Who from your unnatural childhood, loved with a woman's passion the husband of another! You Janus-face! It is not well to disturb the peace of the tomb—to call up the dead!"

She laughed wildly, and taking off her glasses with one hand, she tore the close muffling shawl from the ivory smooth, white throat with the other, asking mockingly, "Does this assist you to recall that missing name?"

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Olive staggered backward, moaning: "My God—Oh, my God! It's—it's Daphne!"

"Yes, Daphne—wife of Philip Keith, and mistress of this house!"

"No—no!" wildly denied Olive, "I am Philip's wife!"

"Not so, I tell you! There has been no divorce! I am alive, and therefore Philip's wife! Ah, it would have been much better for you to let sleeping dogs lie quiet. I wished only peace. I was willing to endure all things silently—but you would not have it so. Well, now your presence here is dishonor to yourself! You, who are simply Miss Marr, and neither maid, wife, nor widow! While I remain as the mother of my own children!"

Their blue fire made her eyes look like gems, as she gazed triumphantly at the shrieking Olive—who, with a bound and a cry, flung herself past Daphne, and into the arms of Dr. Keith, who stood in the drawing room door.

His face was chalky-white, his eyes cold and hard. The full, free voice, the round, smooth, haughty throat, the blue sparkling eyes told him all. There was no room for doubt. In one moment he recalled all the shame, the furious anger, the long discomfort of the time abroad, this woman's act had caused him. Anticipating with horror the further publicity and scandal, his first thought was that a woman was quickest

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dominated by bluster, and the high hand. So when Olive gasped, "I am your wife, Philip—am I not?"

He answered: "Yes—nothing can alter that fact. And you, madame, must withdraw from this house at once!"

Daphne, speaking steadily, answered: "When I have seen my children!"

The doctor laughed wickedly: "You will see the children when the law gives you the right. Call them now—I shall not prevent you. May is old enough to, at least, partly understand. If you summon them, I will tell them who, and what you are!" Daphne's face was deathly—drops of agony stood upon her brow.

"I will tell them how you, their mother, without a thought, a word, a kiss, abandoned them, and their father—all honor and decency, to fly with your lover! Can you guess what it will mean to a delicate child like May, to know the mother she has been taught to honor, is one of a proscribed class?"

"Philip! Philip!" pleaded the woman. "For God's sake cease! Your own guilt and disloyalty make you cruel! By your soul, and by mine, I swear I have the right to my children's love! I have had no lover! I am as unstained as when you led me through that door a bride!"

The doctor sneered: "You will have the privilege of proving that assertion by legal pro-

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cedure—but I forbid your speech with the children!”

“Madame! Oh, Madame Varide!” called two young voices. “It is way after lesson time, and we are all ready to recite!”—and in they skipped, joyously—then halted.

“What is it?” they asked together.

The doctor cast the shawl about madame’s shoulders—she was ghastly: “I am going away!” she said, and swayed weakly, as she stood.

“Oh, papa!” pleaded May. “Don’t let her go!—oh, don’t!”

Little Philip flung his arms about her knees. “Can’t Daffy-May and me and ‘Scissors’ go too?”

“No, Master Philip—I must go alone! Good-bye!”

May tore suddenly away from the doctor, and flung herself on the teacher’s breast, and under cover of a choking embrace, she whispered wildly, “I know! I know! Oh, speak to me—kiss me!”

The tortured woman breathed hastily, “Daphne-May—my heart!” With a gasp the child sank limp, and the mother motioned the doctor to take her.

“You will come back again soon?” wailed small Philip.

“No—no!” answered both Olive and the doctor.

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But Daphne lifted up her head and cried: "Yes, dear! Yes. I'll come again for you and sister—though Death himself should try to halt my flying feet!"

She reeled to the door, and meeting there the Professor, wild and terrified, she, loyal to the last, spoke loud, "Professor, I have deceived you long! Forgive me? Your grandson will explain all!"—and passed up the stairs.

An hour later, she stood, bag in hand, at the basement door. Clutterbuck handed her a scrap of paper, bearing an address: "They are decent, honest people, ma'am." Then dropped upon her knees, and clasping Daphne's hand between her own she burst out with: "Oh, let me go with you, ma'am? I'll not be ten minutes gettin' on me things? And I'll look after you till the one of us must die."

Daphne leaned forward and touched her lips on the old woman's furrowed brow.

"Stay with the children, Louise—in that way you will serve me best!"

"And this," cried Clutterbuck vindictively, "is what comes of givin' a bride pearls!"—as she watched the lonely figure passing for the last time from the old Keith house.

That night, at Montreal, Dr. McNab read again and again a telegram that said:

"All is over—my Paradise is lost—your hopeless, but ever grateful—Denise Varide."



## CHAPTER XVI.

### MAY AND PHILIP'S SHORT PRAYER.

The trouble with the drains in the old house facing the park was serious. Olive was feverish; one of the maids was down sick. Dr. Keith arranged with Dr. Jones for a sleeping chamber in his house for occasional use, when it would be inconvenient for him to go up nightly to Highlawn, where, for safety's sake, he was sending the family ahead of him.

But a bare two days after the departure of Madam Varide, Dr. McNab was facing Professor Keith, and demanding an accounting of that lady's sudden departure, and present whereabouts.

Of the latter, the old gentleman shamedly admitted he had no knowledge, but a questioning of the servants revealed the fact that she had spoken with Clutterbuck, and after much entreaty, and many assurances of kind intentions, that good woman gave the address of madame's humble retreat.

The interview between the two men had been long, and both faces showed signs of emotion, when they clasped hands at parting.

It was after the Keith family had gone up the

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river to the country home, and the city house had been given over to workmen, with orders to tear out the defective old system, and install the newer, better open plumbing throughout that Dr. McNab and Madam Varide sat in a weirdly decorated, but very clean and orderly little sitting room, in a tiny flat, far over on the upper east side of the city.

He was reporting what he had done. How he had engaged a lawyer of great experience and high standing, to straighten out her legal tangle. How he had visited Stanley Belden, who was in sorry case, almost a man dead in life; who, when he had recovered from the shock of knowing her still alive, had shown a touching desire to serve her at any cost, to send a deposition or even enter court, if need be. He was also able to give present addresses of the then office clerk at the Windsor Hotel, and of the doctor who had attended him during his illness at that place. He was positive that her nurse there could be found, and her innocence of wrong-doing would be proved.

He had also seen Dr. Keith, and had found him convinced that she, for sake of revenge, would give all possible publicity to the case. At this madame had wrung her hands silently, and then Dr. McNab had taken them gently in his, and further said:

"Don't!—I told him how unworthy was the

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thought; told him that for the sake of the innocent unborn, you were eager to have everything peaceably settled, and as privately as possible. That your dearest hope was to legally prove your innocence, and your right to the children's respect, as well as love. He was going to send them away from fear of you, but I reassured him on that point; telling him you had sworn never to claim them as your own till you had the legal right—lest he should dishonor you in their young eyes. And by his shamed, averted face, I know he believes in your innocence now, but has neither the moral courage, nor the generosity to say so openly.

"But now, while you have to endure the law's delay, come back to the old Canadian home, where sister Mitty waits impatiently to welcome you. To the home, that, when you are there, is like an old velvet case that holds a precious jewel in its safe keeping. Will you come?"

She moved restlessly. "It is not well to lean supinely on another's strength."

"But if to that other's strength it is a joy and honor, such leaning? Have no fear of the future. Once you are vindicated, we will make no further claim upon you; you shall go free, without one protesting word or reproachful look."

"Oh!" she cried, "I am unworthy of such selfless kindness! But be a little patient, devoted

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friend, and I will gratefully slip again into the place you make for me in your peaceful home. Only first I must steal another sight of my darlings! No, I will not speak to them, until I can do so in safety from cruel accusation. But let me see them once more?"

He looked troubled. "I don't see how you can manage that. It would be very easy to arouse the suspicions of Dr. Keith, and he could be very unpleasant."

She smiled. "I lived at Highlawn long. I know where I can find temporary shelter, very near the old house, and Mrs. Clutterbuck will do my will, and bring my treasures, all unconsciously into my range of vision. Then I will go for a while to you."

"Thank you!"—and arose.

She sat staring into space. "It is strange, but somehow I can't see myself in Canada again. I have an inexplicable calm certainty of the approaching end of all things."

"Pshaw!" and he shook his head impatiently. "Your nerves are all at loose ends. These months of strain and stress have left you a mere shadow of yourself. No wonder you suffer!"

"But I do not suffer. This strange conviction leaves me calm, almost uplifted."

"Nerves—nerves, I repeat! Oh, you delicate creatures, what powers of endurance you possess! Strange combination of gossamer

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frailty and steel-like strength. When I think of the heavy cross you have borne in silence through these years; when by your adoring love, I measure your agony of longing for your children, when I think of your secret tears, while publicly you faced us with such gentle, smiling pleasantness—I—I could forget my manhood, and weep like any child."

He took up his hat, and brushing it carefully with the underside of his sleeve, asked: "By what name, my dear lady, do you wish to be addressed?"

"I wish to wear my own name, and give back to the poor dead woman her's. But for a little time longer, I think, 'Denise Varide' will make for the privacy we desire."

He nodded approvingly, then asked, "When shall you go to the country?"

"To-morrow—to-night, perhaps."

"Then I will go and establish myself at the village inn, and if I am noticed particularly, I shall simply go up to Highlawn and see the Professor, as if that were my sole purpose there. And as soon as you have had a sight of your bairns, you will send me word? Nay, do not shake your head. Your whimsies have somehow infected me, and I'll not lose sight of you, till I can doff my old hat to you in the window of the house in Montreal."

She gave him her hand. His bright old eyes

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dimmed as he held it a moment. Then he went out, and on the corner waited for a down-going car—but stood so wrapt in thought, that one car passed without his knowledge.

“What the devil does she mean by the approaching end of all things? And why can’t she see herself in my house again?”—and he kicked vengefully a bit of orange peel off the walk.

“And what in God’s name does it mean, that I—I can’t see her there either? Have I got nerves, too? Hi—Hi! there!”—and he swung himself on to the car, looking more like a very alert Scotch terrier, than the mighty surgeon and clean-hearted gentleman he really was.

The Keith family had no sooner reached Highlawn than the spring-like weather changed abruptly to almost winter cold. Everyone was miserable. Olive, half wild at her present position, made absolutely no effort to direct the household, or secure the comfort of the family, and Dr. Keith, who for years had made his physical well-being of first importance, remained in New York as much as possible, where he was snug, and at perfect ease; enlivened and refreshed.

Because of his absence Olive felt herself aggrieved. She had a good memory; she recalled the care and tenderness he had bestowed on Daphne in like cases. Having slight cause to trust him, she tortured herself with wild imagin-

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ings, with frightful suspicions; and strange to say, in spite of Daphne's wrecked beauty, she feared her more than any woman alive.

"I said she was uncanny—and she is. She puts a spell on men. That Canadian surgeon, who never saw her beauty, is as much her slave as ever Belden was. She is Philip's wife, no matter what I say! Suppose he should desert me, and go back to her!"—and then she would fling herself about, and shriek and cry. True, the doctor had once said to her, that of course he would remarry her; that a man would be a cad who acted otherwise under the peculiar circumstances—but she thought she heard a touch of self-approval in his voice, a tone of condescension, that turned her red from head to foot.

And while she tormented herself, the others were forlorn and uncomfortable. The servants were captious and quarrelsome. Professor Keith was harassed with a constant cough. May's face was wan and white from unceasing grief, and a secret belief, that she dared not speak of, even to great-dad.

But for Clutterbuck's watchful care the children might have had a cold as bad as the Professor's. She had brought up hot smoothing-irons, and had dried and warmed the little beds thoroughly, and had shut off all possible draught with a screen.

There was no piano for practice as yet, no

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lessons to fill the hours. Even "Scissors" was sulky because of the cold. Little Philip once or twice a day buried his head in his beloved Daffy-May's lap and cried in sheer misery.

Then a cold rain began to fall, and Clutterbuck, angry at the doctor's absence, and Olive's indifference, went prowling in the cellar, and finding a rusty old wreck of a furnace, with a cracked bowl, without hesitation or word to anyone, she proceeded to make a fire—and a dirty job it was. That the pipes were red with rust meant nothing to her. That the registers might be full of fluff and dust, never occurred to her. There was at first considerable wood smoke through the house, but it soon cleared away, and no one complained as it was held to be a promise of comfort to come.

Shortly after she had removed all signs of encounter with the ancient furnace, Clutterbuck noticed a stolid-looking, shock-headed lad loitering about a rear grape arbor, and she went out to meet him.

Immediately he asked her if she was "Mrs. Clatterback."

"No, I ain't, you donkey! But I'm Mrs. Clutterbuck, and what's that to you once?"

He plunged deep into a pocket, and brought out a rather damaged-looking note. It was signed "Madame Varide."

Flushing and trembling, Clutterbuck asked:



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"Where is the lady that gave you this? How can I find her?"

"Huh! easy enough. She's at the Wood's cottage. If you go around to the front by the way of the road out there, it's a long ways to walk. But if you go across the old orchard, and get over the wall, you'll be right in the cottage back yard, and it won't take you ten minutes time."

"But can I get over the wall?"—she asked, uneasily.

He grinned as he nodded his head. "There's a place where it's low, and has a step, too, just same as doorsteps, and she's had some white-wash put on them to show you the right place."

"Tell her, then, I'll come the first minute I can manage to-morrow. Tell her that right now, and I'll pay you somethin' to-morrow." He nodded and turning, made his way back toward the neglected orchard, and disappeared.

Then she donned an all-concealing white apron and sought Professor Keith, carrying a steaming bowl of herb-tea, which she offered with such a clumsy good will, as a sacrifice to his cold, that he straightway drank the nearly scalding potion with genuine gratitude; and allowed May to spread a rug about his trembling limbs.

Then Clutterbuck laid before him the information that a decent woman not far away,

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owned a dog that had a fine litter of puppies at about the weaning age. May and Philip together gasped ecstatically as one child. And the decent woman thought Miss May and Master Philip might like to see them, and perhaps choose one or even two for pets. And she had left her kettles and sauce-pans, to ask if he would permit her to escort the little people to the decent woman's house to-morrow, "If it didn't rain again?"

May's arms went about the shrunk old neck. "Great-dad! oh, great-dad, may we? Little fat puppies! Little live things, that can love us back! I will care for them, and train them very nicely! May we, great-dad? Besides"—she pressed her cheek to his—"Our dear, dear madame was going to ask you for a little dog for us—wasn't she, Philip?"

Philip nodded, and with features screwed up ready for tears, quavered: "If we can't have her back, why can't we have the puppies?"

"Great Julius Caesar! Who said you were not to have them?" growled the old gentleman. "It will be all right, I think, Clutterbuck, to take them over to your decent friend's to-morrow. Only be sure the puppies are healthy. Thank you for the tea, it has warmed me nicely."

And as she descended to the lower regions, laughter filled the two little throats, and as an expression of their own great joy, they gave a

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lead pencil to "Scissors," who bowed and chuckled, and cut chips and kissed May, rejoicing in the pleasant warmth.

Downstairs, Clutterbuck made many mistakes, owing to excitement. "God bless her, poor lady! She shall see her little ones, while they are busy over the dogs. Talk with them, if she likes, or take them away with her for all me. Didn't I see her buy them with suffering, and nearly pay for them with—with death! They belong to her fast enough!"

That evening Dr. Keith came up by a train that just saved his dinner. "Why, I'm sure you're very snug here after all?"

"Yes," answered Olive, crossly. "We have been snug enough to keep our teeth from rattling, for about four hours."

Professor Keith—when his cough permitted him, said: "It is odd, Philip, what luck you have in avoiding any inconvenience, any extreme of heat or cold; any lack of comfort or cheer, and always come floating in on the full tide of solace, of gratification and enjoyment."

Both men laughed, but Olive peevishly persisted: "There's no luck about it. It is self-love brought to a high art."

"Evidently it would have pleased you, Olive, to have had me here in time to share grand-dad's cold with him—which is not very amiable, to say the least. I must remind you, however, that

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for your own sake, and for the sake of the—expected—that the sooner you resume your former disposition of cheerfulness, of frolicsome high spirits and fun, the better it will be for you both. You can't sing misereres all the time, without harm following to the—”

The Professor cleared his throat loudly. “Little pitchers,” warned Olive, and both children fidgeted uncomfortably, knowing perfectly that they were referred to.

After a constrained and far from pleasing evening, the family retired. Dr. Keith felt a pang at his heart when, peeping into their bedroom he saw May holding Philip's hands while he said his short prayer, and closed with: “God bless papa and mama, and sister, and great-dad, and her, too—amen.”

The blood rushed to his face. He knew who they prayed for. How they had improved under guidance. Olive would never be more to them than a somewhat short-tempered playmate. How quickly, even in her character of stranger governess, she had won the tenderest love of these two children of his—and hers. And in that moment, for the first time he saw plainly that all the suffering and anguish Daphne had endured; all the present complication, his domestic discomforts, all flowed directly from his first sin against the pure wife, who had truly loved him. And then discovered, had be

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been utterly mad, that he made a mock of his crime against the proudest woman who ever had such bitter insult offered her? "And had not Olive flattered unceasingly my cursed vanity: kept me dizzy with clouds of incense—I would have humbled myself, and prayed forgiveness, as grand-dad wished me to. The mother in Daphne would have pardoned me, and if the wife refused, I would have courted her again and won her back—proud, sweet Daphne! Well, God knows through my wrong-doing, I have placed the rod in strong and willing hands, and I feel it often." He smiled grimly, and as May, after her prayer, crept into bed, her father turned away murmuring, "God bless them both!—and her!"—and went to a separate apartment, as he had done since the discovery of Daphne's continued existence, and soon all were sleeping.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A LEAP TO DEATH.

Across the orchard in a rear room of the bare little cottage, Madam Varide had rolled high a blue paper shade tied with cord—so that when lying on the bed she could see the chimneys of the old summer home, outlined against the sky.

The rain had ceased—to-morrow promised to be fair, and she rejoiced at the thought of watching, unseen, while they selected the puppies she had already paid the “decent woman” for. Even now she could hear small whimperings from the basket on the porch at her window; sounds that told of the momentary absence of their white mother, whose two tan ears gave her a placid, mild appearance, utterly contradicted by her ceaseless activity, and wild hilarity of spirits.

And so watching the dim outline of the roof that sheltered her darlings—she fell asleep and dreamed distressfully. The village was crowded—a great body of horsemen were coming down the road, and directly in their way, Daphne-May and little Philip strove to save two small white puppies from being trampled on! With a wild cry she caught at them—and awakened. She drew her hand across her wet brow, and

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noted with amazement that the sky was fiery red. Aloud, she said, "How does the sun come to rise in the West?"

Then rose a sudden shower of sparks—and she knew!

With one ringing cry of "Fire! Fire!" she was thrusting naked feet into shoes; throwing a heavy dressing-gown about her; a shawl over her head—and then she was out of the house and crossing the orchard, while all unconsciously her lips mechanically repeated, "From battle, murder and sudden death—from battle, murder and sudden death!"

Sobbing and gasping for breath, she stood before the house. Some neighbors were calling out, and pounding at doors and windows—but the inmates slept like the dead. My God, were they dead?

The shock-headed boy fled down the road to give the alarm to the village fire company.

Madam Varide, seeing a man kicking at the door, called, "There's an axe in the woodshed by the kitchen!"—and in a moment more he was breaking down the door.

Shrieks began to resound from the interior. Two servants escaped by the back-way. Then the Professor with little Philip pick-a-back, stumbled weakly down the front steps, and next the doctor led Olive out—while Clutterbuck, shrieking like an Indian, but holding her scant

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night-clothes tight about May, came plunging out with a great cloud of smoke behind her.

"Are all out?" shouted the doctor, and ran to the back of the house, to order all there to the front for a roll-call.

Clutterbuck suddenly rushed after him to remind him that the man-of-all-work slept in the basement.

Madam Varide, shrinking from his recognition, returned to the front to watch over the children's safety—yes, there was little Philip, but—but in God's name, where was Daphne-May?

She gave a piercing cry, which was answered by a shriek of terror from a maid.

"She's gone, in spite of me! She's gone in the house again—the little girl! Yes, she's gone back for that pink bird of hers!"

Olive wrung her hands and fell upon her knees. The old Professor made a desperate effort to re-enter the hallway, but two men held him back, yelling that the stairs were going! Madame slipped past them, and flew up the bending stairway, that gave way with a crash, as she reached the second floor.

She rushed to the large chamber, and inside the door met May, one arm across her smarting eyes, the right hand dragging the heavy cage.

"Down on your knees, child!" cried madam.



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"No!" answered May determinedly. "I must get poor 'Scissors' down stairs!"

She would not terrify the child by telling her she would not pass down those stairs again, but told her to: "Kneel down, where the smoke is not so dense, and take 'Scissors' out of the cage, and set her free at the window—quick now!"

And as the little one was opening the cage, madam secured a towel, and wetting it at the ewer, held it over her face; took the bird, and carrying it to the window, flung it far out into the pure air.

As she did so she was seen, and a shout arose. Those below held out a blanket, but a sheet of flame sweeping across the hall window, forced her to jump back. When it passed, she leaned far out, crying: "To the wing windows—quick!"—they heard and obeyed.

Then she dropped upon her knees, and giving May a hold upon her gown, told her to creep after her, and they made their way into the adjoining room, into the wing.

Here she bundled together a blanket and bedspread, and flung them out, to reinforce the strength of the only one they seemed to have below.

"Quick—hurry!" they cried up to her.

"Come, darling!" she entreated, "let me see how brave you are!"—and then May only recognized her.

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"Oh, it is you—you!" she cried with rapture, hanging about her neck, and kissing her wildly.

"Yes, but come, sweet. Papa is calling you!"

She led May to the window, and out upon a tiny balcony, but the child clung madly to madam.

"I can't—I can't jump—unless you jump with me!"

"But dear one, if we jump both at once, we will both be killed! You don't want to kill me, do you, child?"—that plea worked.

"Will you truly, truly jump after me? Truly, truly and for sure?"

"Yes—yes! Only for God's sake, don't hold so fast to me!"

A shower of sparks fell on them. She managed to help the child over the balcony rail, and faced her outward. Tore her clinging fingers loose, then with an absolute ferocity of command, cried quickly, "Jump—now!"—and Daphne-May sprang out and down to safety in the outstretched blanket.

At that very instant a tongue of flame licked upward to the balcony; smoke poured out and half obscured her figure. When they saw her clearly again, she was beating out the fire that had caught her sleeve.

"Jump! Jump!"—they roared up to her.

She saw down the road, racing men and horses, coming to their aid—still, she hesitated.

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Then came a shout in a voice she knew. Dr. Keith, bareheaded, with May at his side, held upstretched arms, and in a tone of agonizing, compelling love, cried: "Daphne! Daphne! For God's sake, jump!"

And with eyes fixed full upon his face, she sprang from the window, pursued by living flame—with flying hair and back-blown garments, she came hurling through the air, and fell—short of the blanket!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DISMISS HER SOUL IN MERCY.

Late in the forenoon, she opened her eyes to consciousness, to find herself in a quiet little room in the house of the nearest neighbor. Numb and motionless, her lower limbs, sharply defined beneath the bed clothing, had the rigidity of death.

At the head of the couch, out of her sight, sat Dr. McNab, and by the other side, sat Dr. Keith; who, with all their skill and knowledge, were as helpless to save, as were the children waiting in the next room.

Her eyes met Philip's. "The child—is she safe?"—she asked eagerly, in a weary, faint voice.

"Thanks to you—yes. But for your self-sacrifice I should be daughterless to-day, Daphne."

A little smile touched her lips: "Ah; but it is good—to hear—my own name again."

Suddenly her face clouded; a look of anxiety came into her eyes. "You will not—disturb—the everlasting rest—of that stranger—to whom—you gave—mistaken burial, Philip? She was a—good woman—and her name—has long been my shelter."

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"She shall not be disturbed"—he promised briefly.

"Thanks—that's well. She will be glad—to see a friendly face—when the great call comes."

Dr. Keith thought she wandered, and lifted troubled eyes toward Dr. McNab.

The injured woman spoke: "There is some-one here—who is it?"—at which the old surgeon bent over her, with anguished eyes.

She smiled, and whispered: "God was very good—to give me—such a friend. But I have—always been—the stormy petrel—of your life—ever bringing trouble."

"Ah—ah," he stammered chokingly, "You do not understand."

Her eyes rested upon his, as very sweetly, she answered: "Good—brave man—yes, I have always understood—I think"—and with a groan, he turned away, and by the open window, stood staring out.

She lay quite still a moment, with closed eyes—then: "I want—the children—Oh! bring them to me!" she implored.

"Rest a little first."

"No—there is no time—to waste now. Why even with—the end so near—I long still to know—Philip—Philip, tell me how I missed—the way? I loved you—and I strove—so hard to—keep your love. By what fault—did I lose it?"

## THE NEW EAST LYNNE

"Your pure faithfulness, your unshaken loyalty—were your faults, Daphne. Absolute security makes man ungrateful, careless, and neglectful. I was unworthy, yet I loved you all the time—and always I was proud that you were the mother of my children."

"I cannot—cannot understand"—she moaned.

"No—you would never understand."

"Perhaps God means it so. Means that love—should be a riddle unreadable. Drawing men—and women together—first by—force of curiosity—then—"

Her argument became too faint to hear, and then with a moan of pain, a sudden sinking came upon her.

Both men busied themselves in her service. They could only hold pain in momentary check, and offer certain stimulants.

When next she spoke, she asked eagerly: "The children? You will let me—see the children?"

"Yes," said Dr. Keith, but slowly, and with averted eyes.

"You will let—me see them— as their mother?"

"That is impossible," he answered.

A wailing cry broke from Daphne's lips: "Philip, don't send me—starving into eternity! Let me—hear them call me—mother, once more?"

## THE NEW EAST LYNNE

"I cannot. Think of all the pain, the confusion such a revelation may create."

The door was opening, as Dr. McNab passionately cried: "Man! Man! cease thinking of yourself! Leave for to-morrow to-morrow's cares! Has this woman not agonized for the sound of that word, for six long, torturing years? Let her see her children—let them know her, too. See—see, man, the end is near!"

Olive burst into tears, and leaned heavily on Philip's shoulder. The Professor, very bent and frail, stood at the foot of the bed—two slow, scant tears creeping down his cheeks. May, beside him, devoured with loving eyes, the white face on the pillow.

"The children—please"—she held out pleading arms.

The little lad broke from Olive's hand, and scrambled up on the bed, and kissed the sufferer's lips, and cheeks, and neck.

"Man-child—my little man-child!"—she murmured with quick, uneven breath, and turned wistful eyes to her husband.

"Have you no gratitude?" demanded the Professor. "She has saved your child's life at the cost of her own. Reward her with the recognition she deserves!"

May crept upon the bed from the other side. She twined her arms about the dying woman's

## THE NEW EAST LYNNE

neck, kissing her eyes, her lips, then hiding her face in the wavy hair, she pleaded: "Speak to me! I know—I guessed long ago! Speak just once! Call me your own—your child—moth—"

A feeble hand touched May's lips to silence, while she herself pleaded, faintly—"Philip—please?"

Olive cried, "For my sake, Philip!"

Dr. McNab, leaning over Daphne, cried, "Quick, man! Dismiss her soul in mercy!"

And suddenly he yielded: "Daphne-May! Philip! Embrace your mother!"

A faint cry followed: "My son—my man-child. Daphne-May—my heart—my soul—my—"

"Mother!" cried the children.

Dr. McNab motioned Olive, who carried little Philip from the room. Daphne and her first born lay clasped in each other's arms—eye to eye—lip to lip. Presently a shiver ran over the dying woman's body. Dr. McNab signalled Dr. Keith—who used gentle force to draw the child away, and between him and great-dad they lifted May from the room.

Lying with loosened hair curling about her face, the unscarred cheek uppermost, a faint smile upon her lips, Daphne dead, looked young and sweet and fair.

The old surgeon, one moment alone with her,



## THE NEW EAST LYNNE

knelt and pressed his lips to the slender dead feet—his first and last caress to the woman, who, for six years he had loved and served in silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the day of burial, another funeral was taking place, but a few feet distant; that of old Mrs. Hartley Dunham. Stanley Belden, leaning heavily on a cane, while Anton supported him about the shoulders, slowly making his way to the carriage, for one moment paused by the old Keith plot. A sudden trembling came upon him. He looked at the open grave and groaned: "There ends an incomparable beauty—and there ends a last great passion."

For that moment there stood within touch of one another, the three men who had loved Daphne Cuyler Keith.

Philip Keith—who had loved her carelessly, and had lost her.

Stanley Belden—who had loved her with mad, dishonorable passion.

Doctor McNab—the elderly surgeon, who had loved her with a pure and honorable love. He, alone, thought of her without remorse. He only could follow skyward with thoughts unabashed—the beautiful Daphne Keith.

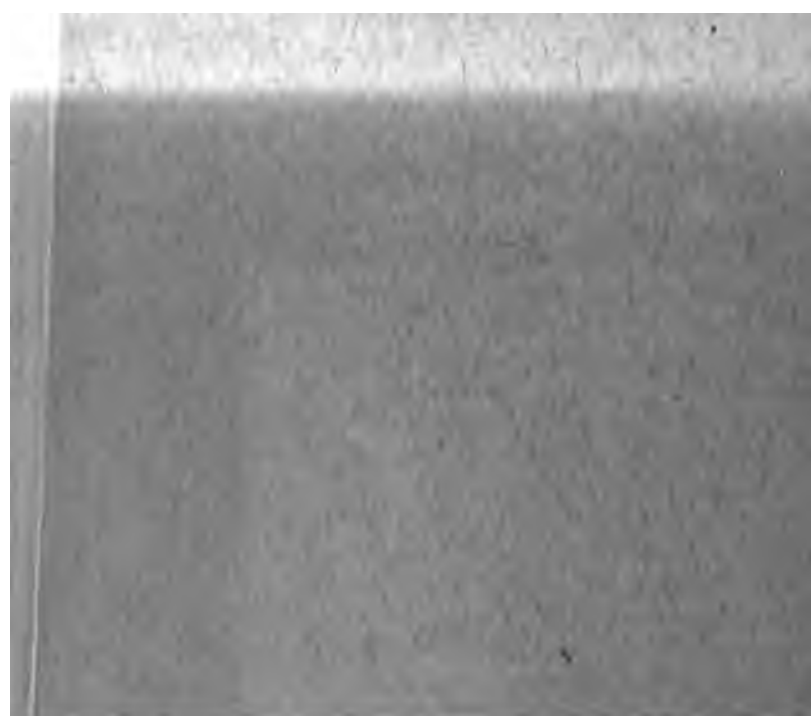
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